



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600007844T



SERMONS

BY

WILLIAM HENRY CLARKE, M.A.

MINISTER OF
ST. PETER'S, GREAT YARMOUTH; LATE CURATE OF
ST. STEPHEN'S, NORWICH.

LONDON:

J. G. AND F. RIVINGTON,
62, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD; & 3, WATERLOO-PLACE, PALL MALL;
AND WILKIN & FLETCHER, NORWICH.

1834

697.



NORWICH:
PRINTED BY WILKIN & FLETCHER, UPPER HAYMARKET.

TO THE CONGREGATION
OF
SAINT STEPHEN'S, IN THE CITY OF NORWICH,
AT WHOSE REQUEST
THESE SERMONS WERE PUBLISHED;
AND TO THAT OF
SAINT PETER'S, IN THE BOROUGH OF GREAT YARMOUTH,
THIS VOLUME
IS RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY DEDICATED,
BY THEIR
FAITHFUL FRIEND AND SERVANT,
WILLIAM HENRY CLARKE.



P R E F A C E .

As this volume may chance to fall into the hands of readers who are not acquainted with the circumstances which occasioned its publication,—I am unwilling it should go forth to the world, without some explanation of the motives which induced me thus to obtrude it on public notice. On my appointment to the ministry of the church lately erected in Yarmouth, some of the members of my congregation in Norwich, requested me to publish a portion of the sermons which I had delivered during the time of my officiating amongst them. This kind wish, rendered doubly grateful to me by the kindness with which it was expressed, I could not refuse, although conscious how unworthy my hasty compositions would prove of so high a compliment.

The discourses contained in this volume were designed in the sincere hope of administering to the spiritual wants of a congregation, composed of various ranks and classes of persons : and they are presented with few alterations, except the occasional correction of inaccuracies of expression and some verbal errors, which from the pressure of other occupations, I had not, at the time, opportunity to revise. The reader will, perhaps, occasionally meet with passages almost verbally the same with those which he has seen elsewhere, without any acknowledgment being made of the source from which they were drawn. It will be necessary therefore, in my own justification, briefly to explain this apparent plagiarism. In consulting such commentators as I had access to on any particular text of Scripture, I have sometimes, I doubt not, adopted even their language as more expressive than any thing which I could write : and not having, at that time, the remotest idea that my sermons would ever thus be exposed to the eye of public criticism, I have generally neglected to mark the passages so borrowed with any signs of reference, and am now utterly

unable to discover those portions which I have thus interwoven with my own writing. Whenever I could trace the sentence to its real owner, I have not failed to do so. And the candid reader will, I trust, should he detect a theft of this kind, overlook it as an unintentional appropriation.

I cannot avoid taking this opportunity of expressing the deep sense I entertain of the honour conferred upon me, by the list of subscribers which stands at the head of this volume. Those members of my late congregation in Norwich, whose names appear therein, will, I am sure, believe me, when I say, that this mark of their affectionate remembrance will remain with me as long as memory shall retain its seat. It affords me, too, no trifling satisfaction to hope, as I have on this occasion reason to do, that I am still surrounded by friends, whose kindness is not less active and sincere than that which I have left behind ; and who will also accept this feeble expression of a gratitude, which I trust no change will impair, no time efface.

I will trespass no longer upon the reader's patience with the expression of my own feel-

ings, except to add, that if the perusal of the contents of this volume shall tend, through the mercy of Almighty God, even in one single instance, to arouse the slumberer, to cheer the faint-hearted, or to warn the negligent, I shall reflect on its publication with gladness, and rejoice in the humble hope that my labour has not been in vain in the Lord.

W. H. CLARKE.

Yarmouth, July, 1834.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.—PAGE 1.

1 Cor. xv, 56, 57.

The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law.
But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through
our Lord Jesus Christ.

SERMON II.—PAGE 15.

Matt. xvii, Part of 4th verse.

Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good
for us to be here.

SERMON III.—PAGE 27.

2 Tim. iii, 15.

And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures,
which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through
faith which is in Christ Jesus.

SERMON IV.—PAGE 39.

Mark x, 50.

And he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus.

SERMON V.—PAGE 51.

Ephes. v, 14.

Wherefore he saith, awake thou that sleepest, and arise from
the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

SERMON VI.—PAGE 64.

Mark iv, 30—32.

And he said, wherunto shall we liken the kingdom of God ?
or with what comparison shall we compare it ? It is like a

grain of mustard seed, which when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds which be in the earth; But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

SERMON VII.—PAGE 77.

Matt. xviii, 1—3.

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

SERMON VIII.—PAGE 90.

Hab. ii, 4.

Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.

SERMON IX.—PAGE 104.

James ii, 14.

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and hath not works? Can faith save him?

SERMON X.—PAGE 124.

Psaln xc, 9.

When thou art angry all our days are gone: we bring our years to an end as it were a tale that is told.

SERMON XI.—PAGE 137.

Heb. ix, 13, 14.

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

SERMON XII.—PAGE 151.*Deut. ix, Part of 14th verse.*

Let me alone.

SERMON XIII.—PAGE 171.*1 John iv, Part of 17th verse.*

Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.

SERMON XIV.—PAGE 185.*John xv, 26.*

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

SERMON XV.—PAGE 199.*1 Cor. vi, 19, 20.*

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

SERMON XVI.—PAGE 217.*Acts xvii, 11, 12.*

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

SERMON XVII.—PAGE 234.*Gen. xxviii, 16, 17.*

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

SERMON XVIII.—PAGE 251.*1 Tim. vi, Part of 12th verse.*

Fight the good fight of faith.

SERMON XIX.—PAGE 266.*1 Thess. v, 21.*

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

SERMON XX.—PAGE 283.*Isa. xxvi, Part of 9th verse.*

When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

SERMON XXI.—PAGE 297.*Isa. lxiii, 1.*

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

SERMON XXII.—PAGE 310.*Deut. vi, 6—9.*

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

SERMON XXIII.—PAGE 329.*Rom. x, 17.*

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

SERMON XXIV.—PAGE 348.*Rom. xv, 30.*

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.

LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS.

The Residence is Norwich unless otherwise expressed.

- | | |
|--|--|
| Aldred Mrs. <i>Yarmouth</i> | Brett Rev. J. <i>Dersingham</i> |
| Alpe Mrs. <i>Gun Lane</i> | Brook Miss S. <i>Chantry</i> |
| A Friend | Brookes Miss, <i>Lukenham Terrace</i> |
| Asker Mrs. <i>St. Peter's</i> | Browne Mrs. Ives, <i>Close</i> |
| Bachelor H. Esq. <i>Yarmouth</i> | Browne H. Esq. <i>Upper Market</i> |
| Back Miss, <i>St. Stephen's,</i>
3 copies | Browne Mr. John, <i>Yarmouth</i> |
| Baker Rev. T. <i>Rollesby</i> | Browne Rev. J. <i>St. Andrew's</i> |
| Barber Mrs. <i>Yarmouth</i> | Brownson Miss, <i>Chantry,</i>
2 copies |
| Baret Mrs. L. <i>Thwaite,</i>
2 copies | Bullock Rev. J. <i>Radwinter</i> |
| Barnes Mr. <i>Yarmouth</i> | Burnett Rev. J. C. <i>Yeovilton,</i>
<i>Somersetshire,</i> 6 copies |
| Barwell Mrs. <i>St. Stephen's</i> | Burton C. F. Esq. <i>Yarmouth</i> |
| Baseley Mrs. <i>St. Giles'</i> | Caddywold Miss, <i>Thorpe</i> |
| Beart Mr. Chas. <i>Yarmouth</i> | Campbell R. Esq. <i>Fakenham</i> |
| Bedford Mr. <i>St. Stephen's</i> | Carlos Miss, <i>St. Stephen's</i> |
| Bell J. M. Esq. <i>Yarmouth</i> | Chamberlin Mrs. <i>Eaton Road</i> |
| Bensley Mr. W. B. | Clarke Mr. F. T. <i>Philpot Lane,</i>
<i>London,</i> 6 copies |
| Bignold S. Esq. <i>Surry Street</i> | Clayton Miss, <i>Chapel Field</i> |
| Bignold Mrs. S. <i>Surry Street</i> | Clowes Rev. T. <i>Southtown</i> |
| Bircham Mrs. <i>Yarmouth</i> | Cockle Mrs. C. <i>Attleborough</i> |
| Blake J. Esq. <i>Surry Street,</i>
2 copies | Cockle Mrs. <i>Attleborough</i> |
| Blyth Rev. W. <i>Oby</i> | Colby Mr. H. <i>Yarmouth</i> |
| Blyth Rev. Gwyn, <i>Burnham</i> | Cole Mr. <i>Crescent</i> |
| Borrett Mrs. <i>Yarmouth</i> | Compigne Mrs. <i>Cranbrook,</i>
<i>Kent</i> |
| Bourne Mr. C. <i>Cranbrook, Kent</i> | Copeman Mr. <i>Hospital</i> |
| Beckwith Rev. Thos. <i>Cley</i> | |
| Bracy Mrs. <i>Yarmouth</i> | |

- Corke John, Esq. *Cranbrook, Kent*
 Cory R. W. Esq. *Yarmouth*
 Costerton J. F. Esq. *Yarmouth*
 Couchman Mr. W. *Cranbrook, Kent*
 Coulcher Rev. G. *Thurgarton*
 Crosse Mrs. *Orford Place*
 Cubitt Mr. G. *Upper Market, Kent* 2 copies
- Daniell Mrs. *St. Giles'* 2 copies
 Davies Rev. D. W. *Cranbrook, Kent*
 Day Mr. P. *Upper Market*
 Day Mr. C. *Yarmouth,* 2 copies
 Dennett Mr. John, *Cranbrook, Kent*
 Dennett Mrs. R. *Cranbrook, Kent*
 Dix Miss, *St. Giles'*
 Durrant G. Esq. *Surry Street*
- Evans Mrs. Dr. *Surry Street*
- Fair Mr. C. *Norwich*
 Farr Mrs. *Yarmouth*
 Felton Mrs. *Sprowston*
 Fenn Mr. John, *Yarmouth*
 Ferrier Miss, *Thwaite*
 Ferrier Mrs. R. *Burgh Castle*
 Fisher Mrs. James, *Yarmouth*
 Fisher Mrs. Charles, *Yarmouth*
 Fisher J. G. Esq. *Yarmouth*
 Fisher Capt. R. N. *Yarmouth*
 Fisher Rev. C. *Ovington, Essex*
 Fitch Rev. Adam, *Cambridge*
 French Rev. W. *Saint John's, Ilketshall*
- Gage Miss, *Norwich*
 Ganning Mrs. *Chantry* 2 copies
 Garwood Mr. J. B. *Yarmouth,* 2 copies
 Gayford Mrs. *Croxton Park*
- Gayford Mrs. S. *East Wretham*
 Gayford Miss, *Bilney*
 Gooch Mr. B. *Yarmouth,* 2 copies
 Gooch Miss, *Norwich*
 Grand Mrs. *St. Giles'*
 Gray Mr. *Dove Street*
 Gray Mrs. *March, Cambridge-shire*
 Green Mr. *Wroxham,* 2 copies
 Green Thos. Esq. *Southtown*
 Green Mr. John, *Yarmouth*
 Grindling Mrs. *Cross Street*
 Gunthorpe M. Esq. *Yarmouth*
 Guthrie Capt. E. N. M. *Yarmouth*
- Hague W. Esq. *Cranbrook, Kent*
 Heritage Capt. R. N. *Cranbrook Kent*
 Herring Mrs. R. *Bracondale*
 Herring Miss L. *Bracondale*
 Herring Mrs. W. *St. Giles'*
 Hibgame Rev. Edw. *Close*
 Hicks Esq. *Postmaster*
 Hills Mrs. *St. Faith's Lane*
 Hotblack Mr. *Orford Place*
 Houchen Mr. John, *Yarmouth*
- Ingram Mr. G. *Cranbrook, Kent*
- Jeffries Captain, *Southtown*
 Johnson Mr. Job, *Yarmouth*
- Keeff Mr. S. *Cranbrook, Kent*
 Keith T. M. Esq. *Pottergate Street*
 Kerrison Miss, *Ranworth*
 Kidd Rev. T. G. *Bungay*
 Knights Mrs. *Yarmouth*
- Lacon Sir E. K. Bart. *Ormesby House*
 Lacon John E. Esq. *Yarmouth*

- Landy Miss, *King Street*
 Larke Mrs. *Yarmouth*
 Laws Mr. *St. Stephen's*
 Laws Mr. J. E. *Yarmouth*
 Laws Mrs. Wm. *Yarmouth*
 Lonsdale Mrs. Jun. *Yarmouth*
- Mabson Miss, *Yarmouth*
 Mallitt Mrs. *Newmarket Road*
 Mann Miss, *Norwich*
 Markland Mr. E. *Yarmouth*
 Marston Mrs. *Crescent*
 Marsh Alderman James
 Marsh Mrs. S. *Yarmouth,*
 3 copies
 Martin Mrs. *St. Stephen's*
 Martin Mrs. *Sprowston*
 Middleton Mr. *St. Stephen's*
 Money Miss, *Yarmouth*
 Moody Miss, *Yarmouth*
 Moore Mr. Chas. *Yarmouth*
 Morse J. S. Esq. *Crescent*
 Morse Miss, *Rodney Street*
 Mott Mrs. *Yarmouth*
 Moyse Mrs. Jane, *Yarmouth,*
 2 copies
- Nairn Mrs. *Cranbrook, Kent*
 Nares Rev. Dr. *Biddenden, Kent*
 Nevill, The Lord Viscount,
 3 copies
 Nevill Rev. H. W. *Bergh Apton*
 Neville Mrs. *Yarmouth*
 Newton Edmund, Esq. *Surry*
Street, 2 copies
 Norgate Mr. *St. Stephen's*
 Norris Charles, Esq. *Mulbar-*
ton, 2 copies
 Norris James, Esq. *Debenham,*
Suffolk
 Norwich Clerical Society
- Ottaway W. N. Esq. *Staple-*
hurst, Kent
 Oxley Mrs. J. P. *Crescent*
- Page Mr. *Gentlemen's Walk*
 Page Mr. *Haymarket*
 Paget Mrs. *Yarmouth*
 Paget F. Esq. *Yarmouth*
 Painter Mr.
 Palmer A. Esq. *Yarmouth*
 Palmer Mrs. S. Sen. *Yarmouth*
 Palmer Mrs. S. Jun. *Yarmouth*
 Palmer J. D. Esq. Mayor of
Yarmouth
 Parlour Mrs. *London Street*
 Parson John, Esq. *Yarmouth*
 Peirson Mrs. *at Rev. J. Bolton's*
Surrey Street
 Pellew Hon. and Rev. E. *Yar-*
mouth, 2 copies
 Penrice Mrs. *Yarmouth*
 Pilgrim Mr. *Theatre Street*
 Preston John, Esq. *Yarmouth*
 Preston E. Esq. *Yarmouth*
 Preston Isaac, Esq. *Yarmouth*
 Preston Miss, M. *Yarmouth*
 Preston Isaac, Jun. Esq. *Yar-*
mouth
 Preston Mrs. Isaac, *Yarmouth*
 Pretyman Rev. J. *Sherrington,*
Bucks
 Pretyman H. Esq. *ditto*
 Price Miss S. *All Saints' Gr.*
 Priest R. Esq. *Hingham*
 Priest Mr. Thomas, *Hingham*
 Priest Mrs. R. R. *St. Giles'*
 Pulley H. Esq. *Surry Street*
- Rackham W. Esq. *St. Giles'*
 Rackham Miss, *St. Giles'*
 Rackham M. Esq. *Thorpe*
 Randall Mr. W. E. *Southtown*
 Ray Mr. *Goat Lane*
 Reeve Mrs. *Lowestoft*
 Reeve Mrs. Dr. *Bracondale*
 Reeve Rev. W. *Beccles*
 Reyner Miss
 Reynolds Mrs. *Yarmouth*
 Riseborough Miss, *St. Giles'*

- | | |
|---|--|
| Robinson Miss, <i>Yarmouth</i> | Thurtell Mr. W. <i>Yarmouth</i> |
| Robson Mr. <i>Yarmouth</i> | Tolver Mrs. <i>Yarmouth</i> |
| Roope Mr. <i>Red Lion Street,</i>
2 copies | Tompson Mrs. <i>Witchingham</i> |
| Rouillon Mrs. de <i>Chantry</i> | Tooth Mr. Wm. <i>Cranbrook,</i>
<i>Kent</i> |
| Rudd Mrs. <i>St. Stephen's</i> | Tooth Mr. R. <i>Cranbrook, Kent</i> |
| Sayers Mrs. <i>Yarmouth</i> | Tracy Miss, <i>Stormont House,</i>
<i>Kensington</i> |
| Scott Miss, <i>St. Giles'</i> | Travers Sir E. Captain R. N.
&c. <i>Ditchingham Lodge</i> |
| Sewell J. Esq. <i>Framlingham</i> | Turner Dawson, Esq. <i>Yarmouth</i> |
| Shorting Mrs. H. <i>Mulbarton</i> | Turner Rev. R. B.D. <i>Yarmouth</i> |
| Sillis Mrs. <i>Bracondale Road</i> | Tuthill Mr. <i>Crescent</i> |
| Simpson Mrs. <i>St. Giles'</i> | |
| Spanton Mrs. <i>St. Stephen's</i> | Wall Mrs. <i>Yarmouth</i> |
| Spooner Mrs. <i>Yarmouth</i> | Watson Rev. F. <i>Yarmouth</i> |
| Stable Miss, <i>Cranbrook, Kent</i> | Watts Robt. Esq. M.D. <i>Cran-</i>
<i>brook, Kent</i> |
| Steele E. Esq. <i>Yarmouth</i> | Welch Robert, Esq. <i>Yarmouth</i> |
| Steward Mrs. T. <i>Heigham</i> | Willis Chas. Esq. Sen. <i>Cran-</i>
<i>brook, Kent</i> |
| Steward Mrs. <i>Yarmouth</i> | Willis Chas. Jun. Esq. <i>Cran-</i>
<i>brook, Kent</i> |
| Steward W. Esq. <i>Yarmouth,</i>
2 copies | Wilkin and Fletcher, Messrs.
<i>Upper Haymarket,</i> 2 copies |
| Steward Mr. C. S. D. <i>Yarmouth</i> | Winter Mr. <i>St. Giles'</i> |
| Steward Mrs. F. <i>Southwold</i> | Wodehouse Edm. Esq. <i>Thorpe</i> |
| Symonds Mrs. C. <i>Yarmouth</i> | Woodthorpe Mr. E. <i>Yarmouth</i> |
| Symonds Miss, <i>Yarmouth</i> | |
| Taylor Miss, <i>Yarmouth</i> | |
| Taylor Mrs. W. H. <i>Yarmouth</i> | |

SERMON I.

1 COR. xv, 56, 57.

The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE chapter from which my text is taken, is one which no Christian can peruse without feelings of the deepest emotion and the purest comfort. The great apostle of the Gentiles seems therein to have been blessed with the fullest inspiration of divine grace, to have exceeded his own wonted powers of eloquence, and to have spoken of the glorious theme of a future resurrection, in language worthy of a subject so exalted. His immediate object in treating of this most solemn topic, was to refute some heretical opinions, which had, even in those early times, crept into the Corinthian church, and endangered its internal peace by the divisions to which they gave

rise. These false notions appear to have been of two kinds, the one relating particularly to the Jewish, and the other to the Gentile converts. Several of the former, having been of the sect of the Sadducees, still retained a portion of their old leaven of error and falsehood, and denied, or at least doubted, the resurrection from the dead. The Gentiles on the other hand, having imbibed the spirit of curious and useless discussion, so common amongst the philosophers of their own age and country, although they did not dispute the fact of a resurrection, yet perplexed themselves with vain and subtle disquisitions on the manner in which the body was to be raised up at the last day. The apostle, in the first thirty-four verses of this chapter, replies to the fallacies of these contending parties, by arguments drawn from the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He addresses himself first to the Sadducean cavillers, and proves to them that the dead shall rise, because Jesus Christ, "who was made in all things like as we are, sin only excepted," was raised up, and had "become the first fruits of them that slept;" and he then shews how every religious obligation depends upon this most important truth. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."

He proceeds, in the 35th and following verses, to refute those Gentile errors, which had origi-

nated in a system of restless and unhealthy disputation, that delighted in casting doubts and difficulties around every subject on which it was exercised. Two objections were started. It was thought impossible that the mouldering tenant of the tomb could again be raised to light and life; it seemed almost beyond the power, even of an almighty arm, to give back the bloom and vigour of existence to the body, on which the worm of corruption had fed and fattened. The difficulty thus insidiously brought forward, St. Paul removes by a single simple instance drawn from the vegetable world. He shews, that in the growth of the blade of corn from the putrescent and buried grain, our own senses are in the constant habit of beholding life and beauty springing from dust and decay. The second objection, referring to the *kind* of body with which the dead are to be raised, he obviates by an illustration derived from the same operation of nature: that as the seed sown springs up in a different dress from that in which it was placed in the ground, but in matter really not different; so shall our bodies be raised again, in a fairer and brighter form, though in substance still the same. Having enlarged upon this happy comparison, he describes in words of divinest beauty, the glorious tabernacle in which our souls shall be enshrined, when the last trumpet shall summon

the spirits of the just. Wrapt in this vision of immortal splendour, he adverts for a moment to the fear and anxieties which men so often display at the approach of death, and the little real cause the Christian has to tremble at his coming; and concludes by shewing what it is that clothes this king of terrors with his garments of dread; and how we may await his call without apprehension or dismay. "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In reviewing this passage, the two points which particularly offer themselves to our notice are the first and concluding clauses,—“the sting of death is sin,” and, “thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” But the intermediate sentence, “the strength of sin is the law,” demands a portion of our attention, and ought not to be passed over without comment. This expression, which is somewhat remarkable, will be best illustrated by referring to other observations of St. Paul upon the same subject, especially to those contained in the seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans. In the 7th and 8th verses of this chapter he says, “I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the

commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law, sin was dead." In these and other similar passages, St. Paul is generally understood to signify, that it is the law which has pointed out those actions which are sinful and those which are not; and that before the law was given, men, not being able to distinguish between things forbidden and things unforbidden, were not culpable in committing offences of which they did not know the guilt. But this explanation does not appear to express all the apostle's meaning. He intended, probably, rather to set forth the hideous nature of sin, than to find an excuse for those who had transgressed, in ignorance of their duty. In this view, then, of the expressions above quoted, we conceive St. Paul's argument to have been, that sin is of so detestable and desperate a character, that it places itself in determined opposition to every thing that is holy, to every commandment of God: and takes no delight in any gratification, except inasmuch as such gratification is contrary to the precepts of religion. For he declares, that he should not have known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. Thus, when the serpent accosted our first parent in the garden of Eden, he invited her to taste, not those fruits of which she might freely partake, but the produce of that very tree which

God himself had forbidden her to touch. And on the same principle does Satan tempt us to disobedience. Of those amusements and occupations which are perfectly and entirely innocent, few, comparatively speaking, are very fond; whilst the votaries of unlawful pleasures are seen to neglect both their temporal and spiritual concerns, in order to indulge their unholy propensities. We are not in general sufficiently aware of this deceitfulness of the heart; we follow the pursuits to which our own degraded appetites incline us, without considering that we are so impelled by the wiles of the sin which reigns within us, and incites us to every action which the law of God condemns. Had the tree of knowledge, placed by God in paradise, been permitted to his first creatures, and the test of their obedience been imposed on some other plant, Satan would never have beguiled them to gather that of which they might freely eat; but would have tempted them to offend, by extolling the gratification to be derived from the very fruit from which they were commanded to abstain. How mistrustful then ought we in all circumstances to be of ourselves; and when we feel a spirit within us, urging us strongly to any particular indulgence or pursuit, we must try that spirit, whether it be of God. Our pleasures and recreations, especially those to which we are

passionately addicted, must be narrowly and impartially watched; must be examined by the test of God's written word, and avoided, if, as will frequently happen, they are found to be incompatible with Christian purity and habitual piety.

And sin, my brethren, which is thus endeavouring at every moment of our lives to lead us away from God; and, by stimulating our unholy appetites and affections, is seeking to destroy the influence of religion in our hearts; will, if we do not withstand its allurements, follow us to the grave. But it will come wearing a far different aspect from that which it bore, when it first tempted us astray. It was robed then in bright and glittering colours; it seemed fair and joyous to our view; it beckoned us on to seeming gratification and delight; it decked the future in a hue of gladness; it promised us happiness if we would tread its flowery paths, and revel in its bowers of ease. But it assumes no such appearance of gaiety, it presents no such prospect of enjoyment, when it visits the last moments of the unconverted sinner. It is stripped then of all its disguise; it stands in its own hideous and naked deformity. It holds out no anticipations of luxury to come; it offers no indulgence as the reward of its service. In the sunshine of health and strength, it threw a false glare of light around its own deceptions, and dressed in roseate colours

the desert of its dwelling. But when health and strength are gone ; when the days of his pilgrimage are numbered ; when the world and all its joys are fading fast from his view ; it seeks its victim to triumph in his ruin, and give him a foretaste of that hell to which he is hastening on. "The sting of death is sin," are the words of the apostle ; and who, that has stood by the impenitent transgressor, in his last hours of earthly agony, does not shudder as he acknowledges their solemn truth. But to many of my brethren, especially to those who are young and inexperienced, scenes so melancholy seldom form a subject of contemplation. They view the unbeliever and the profligate only in their moments of riot and dissipation, when pleasure directs their course, and ere the body is enfeebled and the constitution ruined. They behold the worldling and the libertine pursuing their respective paths of perdition, with the semblance of tranquillity and peace ; and floating down the stream of life apparently undismayed by the perils which surround, or the fate that awaits them. But the hour of the sinner's dissolution is known to few ; and few, therefore, of those who have been the spectators of his guilty revellings and unhallowed indulgencies, are witnesses of the fearful penalty he pays, even in this life, for his brief career of iniquity and shame. Hence, it too often

happens, that the dreadful judgments denounced against sin are overlooked; and that we forget the terrors of that day when our souls shall be summoned from earth into the presence of a just and holy God.

Our indifference upon this subject does not proceed from any contempt of death, but from a most culpable and perilous neglect of its approach and its consequences. There are few of those now present before me, who would not tremble at the thoughts of being called away at the instant, from the world they have loved so long, without time for penitence or for pardon; and who, if a sudden and terrible destruction were to fall upon them, could resign themselves with hope and confidence to their Maker's decree, and give up their spirit with an humble prayer into their Saviour's hands. Death, my brethren, must be indeed to all of us a scene of awful anticipation, and, in some respects, of painful reflection. There are few who have not some ties which bind them to earth, some relatives whom they love, some friends whom they esteem. The home of their dwelling, too, is pleasant to their memories, and the plains amid which their feet have so often wandered are still dear to their hearts. To bid these, then, a long and last farewell, to set out upon a journey from which they are never to return, must, from the earthly affec-

tions which still linger in their breasts, excite a momentary pang of sorrow and regret. But this is not that sting of death of which the apostle speaks. This is but a passing cloud of anguish, which will soon melt away before the sunbeams of Christian faith. But there is a death which harrows up the soul, which no charm can mitigate, no medicine relieve; when the restless spirit, summoned to quit its fleshy tabernacle, strives to evade the summons which it dares not disobey. It is, in truth, a fearful thing to view the closing hours of a life like this; to behold the wretch, who has never prayed before, supplicating for mercy now, begging for one moment more of being, one drop of water to cool his burning tongue. A dark cold mist of misery hangs upon his soul; from the past he derives no comfort, in the future he has no hope. The sins of his former years, his careless life, his mockery of worship, hitherto unnoticed and uncared for, come in a long procession now, and hover around the couch of his last earthly rest. Rest, did I say; oh, no! there is no rest, no peace for him, in time or in eternity. And why does he thus shrink with terror from that doom which he is conscious he cannot shun? Why does he cling so madly to earth, when he knows that he must soon quit it for ever? Not because he loves it, my brethren; not because the remembrance of its past enjoy-

ments is pleasant to his spirit, (he has cursed them rather as the cause of his undoing;) but because he dreads that awful presence into which he must soon be hurried; because he would rather the hills should fall on him and the mountains cover him, than stand before the bar of God's tribunal when he comes to judgment.

This *is* the sting of death, and this is sin's doing. This end, terrible as it is, is, with various modifications, the fate of all who live without God in the world. This is the haven to which Satan conducts his victims; this is the goal of their hopes—this the reward of their services. One would think indeed that so awful an end of guilt, might be sufficient to alarm the fears even of the most careless and indifferent; and to impress upon every soul, a deep and anxious desire to escape from such terrors, and to come before the Saviour's throne, with the hope, at least, of mercy and forgiveness. And yet there are many, I fear, amongst us, who would indeed, like Balaam, be willing to die the death of the righteous, but who refuse, like him, to embrace the only means by which they may attain such peace at the last. We would receive the prize without running the race; we would wear the crown of victory without mingling in the perils of the fight. But this may not be; we must enter the vineyard ere the hour of reckoning comes; we must traf-

fic with the talent committed to our care, ere the master return to claim his own again.

But to what cause is to be attributed, that so many neglect the offers of salvation until it is too late to embrace them? Why do men so eagerly crowd to the ways of sin, which will lead them only to the gates of everlasting misery? Is God less careful to call us into his own paths of pleasantness, than Satan to lead us astray from them? Are the joys therein set before us, less intense or less enduring than the pleasures which the tempter offers? Is the happiness even we can enjoy on earth, less soothing when it is the gift of religion, than when it flows from the polluted fountains of guilty disobedience? You have seen the end of the sinner's career; is it such as you desire to make your own? You have beheld his despair, you have heard the agony of his vain and frantic supplications; do you wish *your* last hours to be so visited and so employed? Or would you rather, instead of thus trembling at death, thus shrinking with anxiety and terror when the gates of the grave are unbarred before you, receive the summons to enter them without dismay, and triumph even in the pangs of dissolution? By some, by many, I trust, amongst you, this sacred wish is by God's blessing deeply and sincerely cherished; ye do desire that the pillow of your last mortal slum-

bers may be watched by hosts of rejoicing angels, and soothed by the hope of sins forgiven and mercy promised. Know, then, my brethren, to your own comfort and your own joy, that this end of the righteous, this hope in death, will be the blessed portion of all who are the children of God's adoption; and it will be theirs, not because they have deserved it or attained it by their own merits, but because Christ has bought it for them with his own blood. Yes, my brethren, in this hour of peril, as in every time besides, it is to Jesus our eyes must look, our hearts must turn. In life or death he is present with us still. Are we in prosperity, he will sanctify it to our hearts; are we in affliction, his name will strengthen us, his Spirit will bear us up. Sin seizes upon our souls, its accursed fetters bind us in bonds which we cannot break. But one word from the Saviour's lips and the chains fall, and the captive is set free. Death comes, disease and suffering precede his approach; he comes but he affrights not; for Jesus has conquered him and crushed the sinews of his strength. He has destroyed this our latest enemy, and has made him the passport to the Christian's rest. And he has done all this for you. Miserable sinners though you are, he is still ready to receive, still willing to bless you, if you call upon him in penitence and faith. Come then within his sacred fold, and

whilst the unconverted sinner goes on still in wickedness, may ye be purified by the Spirit of Christ ruling in your hearts; and so will ye find at last, when the day of trial and of danger comes, that he hath indeed snatched the victory from the grave, and robbed death of his sting.

SERMON II.

MATTHEW XVII, PART OF 4TH VERSE.

Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here.

To a mind duly impressed with the sentiments of religion, duly sensible of its importance beyond all other objects of human enquiry, every point connected with the life and ministry of our blessed Saviour, becomes deeply interesting and instructive. The ways of God are often, indeed, inscrutable to man, and it ill becomes his frail and erring creatures, to attempt to scan too minutely the mysteries of his dispensations. But the pious heart derives comfort and delight, in meditating upon those blessed events connected with the great scheme of our redemption; in tracing their origin to the same bounteous hand; in discovering how they all tend to promote the merciful object in view, and display the goodness

and omnipotence of the great Creator. Nor if we approach the study with humility of heart, with a deep sense of God's eternal and unchanging truth, will our researches be displeasing to him or unprofitable to ourselves.

Of the many circumstances which are so strongly marked in our Redeemer's life, few are more interesting or more consolatory, than that which is usually termed his transfiguration. It was the only period during the whole of his earthly sojourning, in which the glories he had left in heaven, were brought down to be his ministers on earth; it was the only time in which he vouchsafed to resume, for a brief space, the splendour he had for our sakes resigned, and to shake off the trammels and burden of mortality. This occurrence is in itself important; because it affords us an additional link to the chain of evidence, by which the divinity of the Messiah is established; but it acquires an additional interest, when we consider the compassionate emotions which gave rise to the event, and the merciful intention with which that event was brought to pass.

In the chapter immediately preceding that from which the text is taken, Simon Peter is represented as having made the following reply to the question of our blessed Lord—"Whom say ye that I am?" "Thou art the Christ, the Son

of the living God." A blessing was graciously bestowed upon him for this acknowledgment, and our Saviour then took an opportunity of announcing to his disciples, that he "must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." He foretold, also, that they must expect to undergo many afflictions and persecutions for his sake; that if they would become his followers, they must be prepared to sacrifice life itself for him, to resign all the comforts and emoluments which the world could impart, and take up their cross and follow his steps. These intimations of approaching trials and sorrows, were so different from the hopes they had been accustomed to cherish; so subversive of all those visions of grandeur and power, which had hitherto consoled them under their present privations; that their benevolent master, anxious to soothe the fears he had excited, and cheer their drooping spirits, by a partial display of the glories which had been his eternal inheritance, took an early opportunity of convincing them of his power and ability to perform the promises he had made. For it must not be forgotten, that after Jesus had forewarned his disciples of the troubles by which they were to be assailed, he also declared, that when "the Son of man should come in the glory of his Father with

his angels, he would reward every man according to his works." In order, then, to give his desponding followers comfort and encouragement, he selected three of their number, sufficient to constitute a legal evidence, and withdrew to a mountain apart, which has been generally supposed, perhaps without sufficient reason, to be the mount of Tabor. Here, in the presence of the three witnesses, he assumed that bright and glorious appearance, which alarmed whilst it reassured them. The veil which shrouds the mysteries of Divinity was for a moment drawn aside, and the disciples saw, with joy and thankfulness, the state of happiness and glory enjoyed by those, who had been God's faithful servants upon earth. It was this glimpse of heavenly peace which called forth from St. Peter the declaration of the text, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." The vision of Moses and Elias talking with Jesus, and the high and holy subject of their conversation, banished for a season his thoughts of earth, subdued his apprehensive forebodings, and confirmed, for the time at least, his faith and confidence. The event, indeed, upon which they discoursed, was one well calculated to make a deep and lasting impression upon him. "They spake," as St. Luke informs us, "of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Moses, the promulgator of the Jewish law, and Elias, the

promised forerunner of the Messiah, were thus brought to testify, by their presence, to the truth of his mission, and the consequent close of that dispensation of which they had been the upholders and advocates. And this, no doubt, formed a part of our Saviour's design. With the consolation which this revelation of glory was intended to convey, a convincing proof was meant to be afforded, that the Jewish economy had brought its years to an end, and was to be succeeded by a purer and better faith. The voice from heaven gave its sanction to the founder of the Christian covenant, and, immediately after, Jesus was found alone. Thus was it intimated, that in him the law and the prophets centered, to him their ordinances and predictions had a direct reference, and in him received their full and final accomplishment.

It appears then, as far as our limited comprehensions are enabled to investigate, that the design of the transfiguration was two-fold: namely, to console the apostles in their present distress, and fortify them against future evils; and in the second place, to show by a clear and significant figure, that old things were passed away, and all things were become new! It may be asked by those who are anxious to find difficulties in every step, and to cast doubts and insinuations upon every page of scripture; if the design of this

miraculous appearance, was of such importance to the comfort and support of the new converts, why was it not more openly displayed, instead of being confined to the observation of a few, and they too, strictly charged not to make it known? It may be observed here, that the same injunction of silence was made in several other instances by our blessed Saviour, after the performance of some of his greatest miracles. The principal reason was probably the same in all. Jesus was well acquainted with the prevailing opinions and wishes of the Jewish people; he knew too, how heavily the tyranny of the Romans pressed upon them, how anxiously they sought an opportunity of shaking it off. He was not ignorant, that in him the Jews expected to have found a temporal leader, who should fulfil their long cherished expectations, and guide them to conquest and to victory. A breath might have fanned these lurking embers into flame; a spark might have kindled a fire, calculated to throw the most dangerous obstacles in the way of the new religion. The Roman government too partook in some degree of the prevailing sentiments, and was alarmed at every uncertain rumour that prevailed. Hence the jealousy and fears of Herod, and his cruelty to the infants of Bethlehem. Our blessed Saviour then, whose kingdom was one of peace and benevolence, in whose reign men were to beat

their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, was desirous of repressing these unfounded hopes, and disabusing the minds of men of their misconceptions and fallacies. It formed no part of his design, to foment tumult and discord in the government; and whenever therefore, he found that the public recital of his miracles might induce the populace to imagine that their destined deliverer had arrived, and excite them to rebel against their governors, he charged the witnesses of the deed, that they should not make it known. This was clearly the case in the present instance. The glorious splendour, with which he was surrounded on the mount, would have been precisely the miracle best calculated to give rise to the disorders he was so anxious to avoid; his command therefore to the three disciples, was more particular, than that ordinarily given upon similar occasions. They were enjoined to tell the vision to no man, until the son of man was risen again from the dead.

Having thus endeavoured to explain the probable cause of this remarkable event, and the motives by which our Saviour was likely to have been influenced, in prohibiting the promulgation of it to the world; let us for a few moments, attend particularly to the words of St. Peter as

quoted above, and endeavour with God's blessing to turn them to our own comfort and edification. And what then was the spectacle, which drew from the desponding disciple, this rapturous exclamation, "Lord, it is good for us to be here?" Was his eye delighted with the fertile plains of Judah, her fair streams and green pastures? Did this mountain view of earth's magnificence and fertility, inspire him with an ardent wish to make his dwelling in a spot from which he might ever be gladdened with the prospect of her abundance? Far other and holier thoughts, arose in his soul. He had been admitted to a momentary contemplation of the glories of heaven, and the radiance which surrounds the throne of God. He had seen the spirits of the just, in that state of happiness and peace, which can alone be found in those eternal mansions which lie beyond the grave. He had beheld those who once dwelt upon earth, and who had drunk deeply of the cup of human sorrows and afflictions, released from every mortal care, and free from the sins and frailties which darkened their pilgrimage below. It is no wonder then, that a spectacle so consolatory and so glorious, and offered too to his view at a time, when the language of his blessed Master had led him to anticipate nothing but calamities and privations, should have dazzled

his senses and almost bewildered his imagination. "He wist not what to say." The first impression on his mind was, in all probability, that the long looked-for reign of the Messiah was now about to commence, that the Lion of Judah had come to his destined sceptre, and that the hour of deliverance was at hand. But the fallacy of these expectations, does not at all weaken the powerful effect of the extraordinary vision by which they had been excited. No greater proof indeed can be afforded of the splendour of this celestial revelation, than the emphatic words of St. Peter, "Lord, it is good for us to be here!" The very thoughts of earth seem to have vanished from the apostle's mind; he appears to have forgotten that he was still subject to mortal infirmities and sorrows, that the land of his present sojourning was still a waste howling wilderness.

See then the mighty influence, which even a glimpse of heavenly happiness can exercise upon the soul. Consider the conduct of this apostle. His blessed Lord had, but a very short period before, been predicting events of a painful and appalling nature. He had announced his own approaching death, he had more than intimated a succession of calamities to those he should leave behind. Yet, notwithstanding these disheartening forebodings; notwithstanding the conviction, that this earth was to prove but a scene of per-

secution and anguish; St. Peter wished to linger on its surface, to build there his tabernacle of rest, when it seemed touched by the cloud of God's pavilion, and hallowed by the presence of the spirits of the just. Do not your hearts throb with the same emotions which filled his soul with rapture? Do ye never, in the day of tribulation and distress, raise your thoughts to those mansions of eternal rest, where the tears shall be wiped from all faces, and where alone true joys are to be found? Even to those who are prosperous in their goings, who have wealth and luxury at command, there are hours of sorrow and anguish, which the world knows not of, when riches no longer charm and pleasures cease to please. When these clouds of wretchedness darken upon the soul, where shall the weary spirit turn for relief and rest; where but to God's sure and never failing mercies? Where can it hope to shake off the burden of its woes, but in that bright and blessed land, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest? But there are many amongst us, who are strangers to the advantages which fortune brings, whose share in this world's goods is small, and who are subject to all the evils and privations which attend the steps of poverty. Some such there may be before me now, and to them I would offer the example of St. Peter, as affording a higher and

holier consolation, than any they can find on earth. Are ye pressed by want and penury; are ye friendless and forsaken in the world; does the scorn of the proud fall upon you, or the eye of neglect look coldly when you pass? Let not your hearts be frightened, neither be ye dismayed. Your onward path may now seem shrouded in darkness; but it will lead you, if you trust in God's mercies and the merits of your Redeemer's death, to a bright and glorious kingdom, to a mansion not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Bend but your thoughts to these abodes of rest and peace; make the attainment of them the object of your solicitude, the solace of your weary pilgrimage; and the blessed and unfading hope will illumine the cell of misery, will fill the hungry soul with gladness, will bind the broken heart. It is not here, my brethren, we must look for happiness; it is not upon earth we must raise the foundation of our dwelling, if we desire peace within its walls, and plenteousness within its gates. It is not in this passing scene of chance and change, that we can wish to make our last abode; for there is not a living man, who is perfectly satisfied with his condition, who desires no better lot, no fairer inheritance. It is in that land which lies beyond the grave, that happiness will be without alloy, and pleasure without end. It is there alone, that sorrow comes not, and misery

never dwells; that the strife and turmoils which desolate this world below, are unheeded and unknown. It is there alone, with God's protection and aid, we may build in safety the tabernacle of our home, and exclaim with grateful and humble piety, "Lord it is good for us to be here."

SERMON III.

2 TIM. iii, 15.

And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

To those who take delight, as every Christian must do, in studying the characters of the persons who are introduced in the sacred writings, the gleanings which they will be able to collect, of the disposition and qualities of Timothy, will be a source of much pious satisfaction and instructive reflection. He was a native of Lystra, a town in Lycaonia ; his father was, or had been a Gentile, but his mother, Eunice, was a Jewess. He was ordained, with imposition of hands, by St. Paul, during his third voyage to Lystra. St. Luke, in the Acts, informs us that this was done in consequence of the favourable testimony borne to his character by the Christians of Lystra and

Iconium. St. Paul, however, assigns a far higher motive for his selection of Timothy, than the mere report of mortal tongues; for in committing to him the superintendence of the church of Ephesus, he assures him, in the most solemn manner, that he was induced to do so at the instigation of the Holy Spirit himself. "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare." By the expression of "the prophecies," the apostle refers to those miraculous revelations, by which, in the early times of the church, the vocation of its pastors was directed. A striking instance of this is recorded in the Acts, where it is stated, that when certain prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the "Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Indeed, on the first propagation of the Gospel, it would have been impossible for the apostles, without such direction, always to have selected the most proper persons for keeping alive in the churches, in their absence, the faith which they had established. Their sojourning in the same place was necessarily too short, to enable them to obtain, by merely natural observation, an insight into the different characters of their new converts. It was a matter, too,

of the utmost importance, that the shepherds, put over the flocks, should be found faithful; and as from the reasons just mentioned, the first preachers of the Gospel had no means themselves of previously ascertaining the qualifications of the pastors, God was graciously pleased to direct them in their choice, by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit. It may be observed here, that in later times, when the church became more firmly established, and men had leisure to investigate the moral and religious capabilities of each other, the necessity for this extraordinary interposition was in a great measure removed, and it ceased accordingly. Both Timothy and Titus, as is evident from the directions given them by St. Paul, were to be guided in their selection of presbyters, as well by observation and experience of their conduct and abilities, as by the recommendation of the brethren.

Such, then, being the high authority on which Timothy was elected to the office of a Christian pastor, we may reasonably infer his extreme fitness, in every respect, for the performance of the duties which devolved upon him. If we reflect, too, for a moment upon the times, in which he was thus called upon to superintend the church at Ephesus, we shall be induced to entertain the most exalted ideas of his fortitude and patience. The difficulties he had to struggle with were

many, and alarming. The heathen and superstitious practices of the Ephesians, to which they were more than commonly addicted ; the schisms and divisions which had sprung up amongst their own members ; all tended to render the office of an overseer one of painful and unceasing exertion. It was a post, too, of imminent danger ; and it is generally said, that Timothy obtained the crown of martyrdom at Ephesus, some years after the death of St. Paul, in prosecution of the duties of the high office to which he was called. However this may be, it is clear that he discharged faithfully the trust committed to him : for the converts of Ephesus were peculiarly the objects of St. Paul's affection, from their " faith in the Lord Jesus, and their love unto all the saints." And no better test can be given of the diligence and zeal of a minister, than the spiritual improvement of the flock over which he presides. The great apostle, too, always addresses Timothy in the kindest and most affectionate manner ; and appears to have entertained for him the care and concern of a father.

Will it not then be an object with every Christian, to ascertain, if possible, the causes by which Timothy was enabled to attain so high and holy a character ? It is well known, indeed, that every good and perfect gift is from above ; merely human agency, can, in itself, be of no avail : Paul

may plant, and Apollos water ; but it is God alone who can give the increase. Still, it is his pleasure, in ordinary cases, to act by second means. He points out, indeed, the steps by which we must attain unto holiness. If we follow that path in sincerity and truth, he will bless us in all our ways ; if we turn aside, he will leave us to ourselves. He invites us, he encourages us by the most gracious promises, to come to him ; he menaces us with the most awful judgments, if we embrace not his proffered mercies ; but still he does not force us into his service. We must enter it freely and sincerely ; we must learn its duties by gradual and continual advances ; and it becomes, therefore, a point of the utmost importance, to know what are the means which he will chiefly vouchsafe to bless. The words of my text, in suggesting the apparent cause of the piety and excellence of Timothy, will also furnish us with an answer to our enquiry. He knew the Holy Scriptures from a child. He was blessed, we read, with a mother of exemplary piety ; who seems to have inherited her religious temper from her mother also. By these affectionate relatives, he was early trained to purity of life and holiness of heart. There is something delightful, as well as edifying, in the contemplation of a character thus disciplined to holiness from his earliest years ; in suffering the imagination to

wander back to the time, when the aged Lois and the anxious Eunice bent over the head of their infant son, watched the dawnings of reason in his opening mind, and strove to make his first lisplings those of prayer and praise. It is in truth a pleasing sight, thus to look, though it be but in fancy, on the beaming features of childhood, taught to lighten up with gladness at their Creator's name, to glow with gratitude at the remembrance of his bounty. This is, alas! a picture too rarely met with in the present times. And it would be difficult to account for the melancholy deficiency, except from that perverseness of heart, and those evil dispositions, to which man is by nature prone. He appears, indeed, to have an instinctive aversion to subjects of religion, to imagine that an over anxiety about them is a feeling unworthy of his dignity. He seems to conceive, that to discourse on God, or God's revelations, is unseasonable or mistimed, except during the hours of sabbath worship. Hence it too often follows, that whilst he displays the utmost anxiety that his children should be early instructed in the different branches of human learning, he ordinarily manifests but little concern as to their progress in heavenly knowledge. There is a fatal spirit of procrastination amongst us, by which we are ever deferring the time of religious instruction. We hear of men attaining the age

of fourscore years, and we vainly imagine that our own lives will be protracted to the same extent. We are, in consequence, apt to suppose, that the days of childhood are not the time to lay up stores of that learning, which is to fit us for another world, rather than this.

Yet no theory surely, was ever more delusive or more dangerous. Does not the grave yawn for the young as well as for the aged? How few of you are there, that are parents, who have not wept over some blighted hope, some fair promise nipt in its bloom. Survey the memorials of mortality by which you are now surrounded; of how many does the legend tell, who have sunk into the night of the tomb, before the first years of manhood had been attained. It is then as important for the young to be prepared to die, as for the aged; they all have souls to be saved, and it will be as fearful for one to fall into God's hands unprepared, as for the other. "The hoary head," says the wise man, "is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness;" and no less beautiful is the piety of the infant brow. What task, then, can be more delightful to a parent's care, than to "train up a child in the way he should go," to guard him against the snares of the world, before its fascinations are spread around his heart; and to teach him the way to holiness, before he has become hacknied in the paths of vice. The

innocence of infancy is a favourite theme, and we are very prone to use it in a much wider sense, than we have any just grounds for doing. The infant, indeed, is at first incapable of committing any actual sin ; but no sooner do the powers of the reason begin to unfold themselves, than the wickedness of the heart is discovered too. And this, indeed, is one of the strongest proofs which can be given of the innate corruption of our nature, that we do in effect commit sin, before we can possibly have learnt it from any external communication. The period of childhood, then, must surely be the time, in which religious instruction may be imparted with the best prospects of success. We have seen, in the example of Timothy, that it is a labour which God will vouchsafe to prosper. The doctrines too, of our holy faith, may be early instilled into the youthful mind. A child may soon be taught to feel itself a feeble and erring creature, to look up to its Saviour for help and assistance, to pray in his name, to hope for pardon in his merits, to endeavour to be obedient to his laws. And what better foundation can be laid for his future welfare, than that which has Jesus Christ as the cornerstone? What better support than this can be provided against the time of adversity, or the hour of distress? If it has been your fate, my Christian brethren, to experience the storms of

adverse fortune, to encounter the scorn, the contumely, and the disappointments of the world, did you not, in the day of tribulation, find religion the only balm for your wounds, the only solace in your troubles? With God's blessing, then, strive to impart this source of consolation to your children also. It will be a better inheritance than the fairest estate—a better legacy than a mine of wealth. You may enlarge their minds with the varied stores of human learning; you may imbue them with the records of the present and the past; you may teach them to grasp the tongues of other days as well as your own; and yet will one spark of Christian knowledge be of more value than all this varied lore. It may be your lot, as it has been that of thousands before you, to behold the flower you have reared with so much care, droop and languish; it may be your painful office, to bear about in sickness the fragile frame, which you have hitherto caressed in its mirth and vigour, and to feel the burden grow lighter every hour; it may be your lot to watch the pillow of its feverish rest, to see the eye grow dim, and feel the tiny heart flutter in its trembling tenement. At an hour like this, say, would it give you comfort, to reflect upon the earthly wisdom, which you had laboured to impart to the fading blossom before you? Would it yield you any delight, to remember the zeal and

care, with which you had endeavoured to inspire an interest for the principalities and powers that perish? Would not one breath of humble hope, one glance of the eye to heaven, one faint whisper of trust in God, and resignation to his decrees, take away even the bitterness of death? It is possible, indeed, to follow to the grave, under such circumstances, the child of our affections, almost without sorrow; and to "commit his body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection."

But when the early reason is suffered to grow wanton, for want of proper culture; when no pains are taken to nurture religious graces, at the same time with intellectual acquirements; we may naturally expect that the latter will run riot in their luxuriance, and overstep the limits, within which they ought to be confined. And this is actually the case. There is a flippancy and a levity about men in the present day, and especially, I fear, about the young, which proclaim but too clearly the defective nature of their early education. It is a melancholy reflection too, though it may be productive of much benefit to ourselves, that the brightest talents are often the most degraded by these unseemly accompaniments. We may learn indeed from all we hear and see, that neither the endowments of body nor of mind,

will form a blessing to their possessor, if God does not breathe a blessing upon them; and we may rest assured, that he will not bless, except we implore him to do so.

In providing then for the future welfare of your children, strive to lead them to the search after "treasures, in heaven," rather than "treasures upon earth;" propose as their model, not the rich and luxurious, not the learned and the mighty, in the world, but the humble child of piety and devotion, the Christian Timothy. But, my brethren, before you can so train up your offspring, you must become instructed in the truth yourselves. You cannot open the fountains of sacred knowledge, until you have also drunk their pure waters. The bible is to too many amongst us a sealed book; we neither peruse it with an unfeigned belief in its truth, nor a sincere desire to obey its precepts. We forget that it is only by the aid of the Holy Spirit, that we can understand the Spirit's revelations: and that when his gracious assistance is withheld, the Holy Scriptures will be made, as by many they actually are made, to countenance doctrines foreign to the spirit and intention of Christianity. They are able indeed to make us wise unto salvation, not by our own feeble attempts to obey their moral injunctions, but through the faith which is in Christ Jesus. This sacred principle pervades

them in all their parts. When our blessed Redeemer went about doing good, faith was commonly required from those, on whom the benefit was to be conferred. In like manner we are justified by faith, we are saved by faith: and by faith the merits of Christ will be imputed to us. Let us then seek diligently by prayer for this saving faith; and let us teach our sons and daughters to seek it too. Let the cares which were shed upon the head of Timothy, by the affection of his parents, be diligently bestowed by us upon our children. In these times of doubt and difficulty, when we are beset on all sides by dangers which we know not how to shun, let us impart to them a portion of that wisdom, which the chances and changes of the world can never impair. Let the bible be the first book they are taught to read, God the first Being they are taught to adore, and Jesus the first name in which they are instructed to hope. By these means, indeed, you may not ward off the stroke of death; you may not perhaps promote their worldly advancement; but you will do far better; you will snatch the victory from the grave, and the crown which earth denies them, will, through God's mercy, encircle their brows in heaven.

SERMON IV.



MARK x, 50.

And he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus.

To every one whose mind is religiously disposed, the perusal of the actions and conduct of our blessed Redeemer, during his abode upon earth, is a continual source of comfort and delight. His miracles of mercy and compassion, are especially calculated to fill our souls with wonder, and our hearts with gratitude. But there is something more in the records of many of these instances of heavenly love, than will strike a hasty reader. Other lessons may be deduced, other consolations derived, upon a careful and devout consideration, than appear at first sight to flow from the subject. When we read of sight restored to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and life to the dead, we acknowledge immediately the greatness of the miracle, and the

bounty which caused it to be performed ; and so far our devotion is heightened, and our religious confidence increased. But our hearts might be often solaced by a far stronger motive to our faith ; might be often warmed by a far deeper glow of piety ; if we did but compare the bodily infirmities of the afflicted objects of our Redeemer's charity, with our own spiritual necessities ; and from the relief afforded to the former, draw the consoling conclusion, that if, in our wants and weakness, we ask for aid as earnestly and as sincerely as they did, like them we shall not sue in vain. In both cases we find the same implicit confidence insisted upon. "Be of good cheer, thy faith hath made thee whole," were the ordinary terms, in which our Saviour restored the cripple to his strength and the sick to health. In like manner, we are said to be "saved by grace through faith : " and we are also commanded to "ask in faith nothing wavering." We shall not, then, employ amiss the time devoted to our attendance here, in endeavouring, with God's blessing, thus to examine, and thus to apply, the particulars of the history to which my text belongs.

"They came to Jericho," says the sacred narrative, "and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timens, sat by the high-way-side begging." In these simple words, a

plain and unvarnished tale of distress and misery is placed before us. The man was blind. God's blessed sun never gladdened him with his light. It was never day to him; but one long, dark, changeless night hung upon his path. The sight of kindred cheered him not; the meads and pastures of his own dear land were fair in vain for him. But this was not all. He was poor and forsaken too. In the wide world, perhaps, he had not a child to love, nor a friend to pity him, for he sat by the way-side begging. He felt deeply, as the sequel shews, the wretchedness of his destitute condition; he felt, too, his own utter inability to relieve the wants under which he laboured, or to remove that dreadful privation, which forbade him the enjoyment of one of God's choicest blessings. In the extremity of his distress, he was compelled to implore the aid of the casual passenger for the relief of his necessities. His petitions might not always, perhaps not often, be regarded; or, if some good Samaritan did pour the oil and wine of charity upon his afflictions and his sorrows, the succour thus given was but a temporary assistance, and could not, in the slightest degree, tend to alleviate that misery which pressed the heaviest upon the suppliant's spirit.

And now let us examine how nearly the state of the sinner resembles that of blind Bartimeus,

especially of the sinner just awakened to a sense of his guilt, and yet unacquainted with the means by which that guilt can be removed. The first emotions thus excited in the soul, are those of anguish and desolation. The only feeling which pervades it, is that of a deep sense of its own guilt, and a constant and terrible dread of God's displeasure; joined with an almost total ignorance of the resources, by which the one may be atoned for and the other averted. It knows not how to pray; it knows not how to repent; it knows not how to believe. It is compelled to seek from others, the aid which it is conscious it cannot minister to itself. It sits, as it were, by the way-side begging: and though it feels there is a sun of righteousness beaming around it, yet it strives in vain to catch the brightness of its rays, and share the blessings of its light. But does God, when, by his grace, the first springs of remorse are opened in the sinner's heart; when the remembrance of past iniquities first becomes grievous to be borne, leave him to himself? Does he turn away from his cries for relief; does he break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax? Let us proceed with the narrative before us, and we shall find a consoling answer to these important enquiries. The poor blind beggar heard an unusual noise; the trampling of many feet, the sound of many voices. He enquired

the cause of this unwonted tumult. He was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. The fame of our Saviour's miracles had doubtless reached his ears. He had been informed, it is probable, of the restoration of others, and he hailed it as an earnest of his own. "And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace : but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me."

And thus it is with the awakened sinner. Though he has lived long, it may be, in ignorance of, and indifference to, the precious truths of the gospel ; yet, in a Christian land, the name of Christ must be to all a familiar word ; and the most wretched profligate, the most hardened infidel, must well know, that he is the rock on which the true believer builds his faith, the corner-stone of the temple of his worship. When, therefore, the name of the Redeemer falls upon the ear of the conscience-smitten offender ; when *he* receives the glad intelligence, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by ; his remembrance of the trust and devotion of others, inspires him with a deep desire to become a partaker in their consolations, a sharer in their joy. He cries out in anguish, yet still in hope, "Jesus, thou son of David, have

mercy on me." But Satan does not so easily relinquish the prize he had marked as his own. The ministers of this spirit of darkness yet hover around the steps of the new penitent, and, by their deadly wiles, seek to drag him back to the paths he has forsaken. The companions of his past hours of riot and intemperance; the threatened sneers of that world in which he has hitherto lived and revelled; the pleasures in which he once delighted; the gratifications in which he once indulged; all charge him to hold his peace. But his Almighty Father, who knows his weakness, will not suffer him to be tempted above his strength; will inspire him with fortitude to resist these perilous allurements; and will not leave his own good work unfinished. When God vouchsafes to seek the lost sheep upon the mountains, be assured he will not seek in vain. The obstacles and snares of the adversary, however painful to be withstood, will but in the end serve to fan the flame they cannot extinguish. The anxious penitent will cry a "great deal the more, thou son of David, have mercy on me." And God in his goodness never permits one thus sincerely contrite to pray long for aid, ere he listens to his prayer. No sooner did our blessed Saviour hear the humble petition of the blind suppliant, than he "stood still and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man,

saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise ; he calleth thee." And thus, my brethren, does God graciously call the sinner, who in the night of his distress kneels to him for aid. Aye, the lowest, the most miserable sinner, will, if he truly repent of his past offences, if he heartily desire to leave the beaten paths of pleasure and guilt, be invited to enter the blessed vineyard of God's inheritance. When your Saviour uttered his gracious promise, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," he excluded none from the blessing but such as refused to come. In the example of blind Bartimeus, every Christian soul may learn, that however destitute his condition here, however friendless and forsaken he may be on earth, his Redeemer scorns not his poverty nor his miseries, but will, if his spirit be sincere and humble, command him to be called, even though he sit by the way-side begging. And blessed is the state, blessed is the faith, and blessed will be the portion, of that poor man, who, instead of repining at his humbler lot, instead of envying the seeming happiness of his richer brother, instead of coveting his neighbour's goods, tarries patiently the Lord's leisure, submits without repining to his inflictions, and in all his sorrows and sufferings exclaims, in the language of Bartimeus, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me."

Nor to the destitute in worldly wealth alone, is this consolation of the gospel confined. To all of you, my brethren, to every soul among you, (for there is not one, who, in his natural condition, is not as destitute and as miserable as this poor beggar was; as blind to the light of God's promises as he was to the sun-beams of day;) to all I would speak in the words of my text; to your hearts I would speak, as the unworthy yet undoubting minister of God's revelations; if, like Bartimeus, you feel your own wants, your own blindness, your own frailty; if, like him, you are penitent; if, like him, you look to Jesus for help, "Be of good comfort, rise, he calleth you." Yes, even now his gracious summons is gone forth; every word of his blessed will which you have heard to-day, is an invitation to enter his fold, to become members of his flock. But you may be called, and yet not be chosen. You must obey the call, or it will have been made in vain. Had Bartimeus sat still in his despondency, had he turned away from his Redeemer's voice, the sightless eye-ball would never have been opened, nor the beams of day poured gladness on his soul. But he heard the summons with joy, and obeyed it with a cheerful and trusting heart. "He cast away his garment, and rose and came to Jesus."

And so must we rise when God sends his gracious invitation abroad; so must we run to him

when he vouchsafes to call us. We may learn, too, from the example of the poor wanderer of our text, that we must not hear his voice afar off; that we must not remain in idleness and indifference, in the vain expectation that he will compel our obedience. God proclaims his message of mercy and love amongst us, he exhorts us to turn from our evil ways, to forsake our present course of guilt and misery, and promises to forgive the offences that are past, to cleanse us from the pollutions with which we are defiled; if we confess the enormity, and repent sincerely of the commission of our sins; if we resolve, with his assisting grace, to amend the ways of our lives; if we hope only to receive the pardon he holds forth, through the mediation and for the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. In this sense, then, you must all rise and come to him; and rise with grateful and gladdened hearts. For why does your Redeemer invite you, wherefore does he stand still in compassion, and command you to be called? Because you are poor, and destitute, and helpless; because he knows your wants; because he has bought you with a price, and willeth not that one of his fold should be lost.

To the proud, the presumptuous, and the hard of heart, the summons of the Saviour conveys no tidings of joy, is no herald of mercy and pardon. It is on the softened and contrite spirit,

on the soul of the self-accused and self-convicted sinner, that this gracious beckoning falls, like the dew of Hermon on the hill of Sion. What tongue shall tell, what language describe, the gratitude of the returning prodigal, when the best robe is brought forth, and the fatted calf is slain? Bartimeus cast away his garment, and ran to meet Jesus. So must you cast off the filthy rags of your unbelief and presumption; you must wash you and make you clean from their defilements, ere you come before your Redeemer's throne. When the nuptial feast was prepared, and guests from the highways and hedges were bidden to the banquet, remember the fate of him who appeared in unseemly clothing. Take warning by his example; it is recorded for your instruction: and forget not, that, at the marriage supper of the Lamb, you will also be cast into outer darkness, if you come there without the wedding garment of penitence and faith.

And if, my brethren, you obey this summons of your Saviour; if, when your hearts are melted within you, and the memory of your past transgressions becomes a burden too heavy for you to bear, you turn to his promises, and trust in his mercies, great will be your comfort, sure and abiding your joy. If the narrative before us has in any degree, by God's blessing, been made a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths, the con-

cluding scene of the history, will afford us a never failing consolation, through all the chances and changes of the world. Though our lot in life be destitute, as was that of Bartimeus ; though we sit by the way side begging ; yet will the comforts and encouragements of religion, cheer the darkest path, and heal the deepest wound. He received his sight ; yes, the poor blind beggar, unnoticed and unknown by all his brethren, who lived and moved around him, was yet heard and relieved by him, who hath numbered the very hairs of our heads, and without whose knowledge not a sparrow falls to the ground. And so, my brethren, will your cry be heard, if you cry with faith, nothing wavering. If you put your whole trust in God ; if you strive to keep his commandments, and to direct your lives by his unerring laws, he will put away the blindness of your souls, and illumine them with the full effulgence of the gospel light.

But once more, ere we part, suffer me to remark upon the importance of the lesson, contained in the words of my text. You must rise and go to Jesus. Even now he passeth by ; he is yet willing to hear you ; he offers you pardon and salvation. But the time of acceptance may soon glide away ; the door of mercy, now open to receive you, may soon be closed for ever. Be it your part, then, to seek the Lord while he may

be found, to call upon him while he is near. Your sins have, indeed, bowed you to the dust; you cannot in your own righteousness enter your Maker's presence; but if you do but acknowledge this guilt; if you do but mourn for it with sincerity and remorse of heart; if you raise your thoughts from man's imperfections and errors, to God's eternity and holiness; if you rise when Jesus calls you, and leave behind the mouldering garment of your evil ways, you will find pardon and peace, if ye seek it "carefully with tears." If there be one among you, who has listened to the exhortations he has this day received; who feels anxious to embrace his Saviour's promised mercies; may that gracious Saviour be his shield and support; may he, in his goodness, cherish the seed of holiness in his heart, until it bring forth fruit with increase. And though great was the joy of Bartimeus when he received his sight, yet will thy joy be greater far, when, at thy Saviour's second coming, thy ears are greeted by the blessed sounds of welcome and forgiveness, "Be of good cheer, thy faith hath made thee whole."

SERMON V.

EPHESIANS V, 14.

Wherefore he saith, awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

THESE blessed words of the apostle were undoubtedly spoken, in reference to some of those sublime effusions of the ancient prophets, in which the inspired lips of these messengers of God, had declared the blessings which were to be conferred upon mankind, when the Lion of the tribe of Judah should break the bondage of sin. Their divine annunciations seem to have made a deep impression upon the apostle's heart; they were interwoven as it were with his thoughts, and he brings them forward, on every opportunity, to enlighten, to comfort, or to admonish, his hearers. Well, my brethren, would it be for us, if we thus studied and thus delighted in the sacred word of God; if, as God commanded Moses, we made it a token upon our hands, and as front-

lets between our eyes ; not like the Pharisees of old, by transcribing it on slips of parchment, and wearing them on our persons, but by writing it on the tablets of our hearts, and making it, as it really is, the tidings of salvation, and the record of eternal life.

St. Paul had just been commenting on the heinous nature of sin ; on the certain misery and destruction, which will be the portion of all, who indulge in its licentiousness and impurities. He had named some of these vices—vices perhaps, to which the Ephesians were particularly addicted, and which are, alas ! but too common in our own land. The solemn declaration with which he enforces his warnings, “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God,” may strike terror into the heart of many a hearer now, as it did into the souls of the profligates of Ephesus. It is probable, indeed, that libertines of this class, were held in no particular disesteem in that celebrated city ; that their guilt was considered as affecting neither their integrity nor their principle ; as the result rather of youthful excess or want of prudence, than of a depraved and vicious heart. It is for you to judge, my brethren, whether the same spirit does not too widely prevail at the present day ; whether there are not too many

amongst ourselves, on whose heads the denunciation of the apostle will fall like a thunderstroke; men, who think no harm in the commission of crimes, which the laws of their country do not punish, or punish but slightly; men, who still maintain their place in society, from whose intercourse no one shrinks, at whom no finger is pointed in scorn.

Our language is rich enough in terms of reproach and opprobrium; but who brands these licentious reprobates with an ignominious name? Do we not rather seek for mild and doubtful phrases, by which their guilt may be concealed, and almost made, indeed, to look like virtue. We stigmatize the man, who, in some paltry wager, some pitiful artifice at a game of hazard, endeavours to obtain, by unfair and dishonest means, the prize for which he gambles, a villain and a scoundrel; but the wretch who would blight the happiness of the friend who trusted him; who would steal into the affection of innocence to defile and pollute it; who would leave to shame and sorrow those who confided in his honour and integrity; we term a gay, or a wild, and sometimes, perhaps, as a stretch of severity, a dissipated man. But God speaks in a different language. In his sacred revelations, no veil of mystery is thrown around our vices; their character and consequences are, on the contrary, proclaimed without disguise.

We are told, in terms too plain to be misunderstood, that the adulterer and the seducer, the miserable prostitute, and the no less miserable companion of her guilt, will mourn hereafter in torments of eternal anguish, that their dwelling on earth has been in these tents of ungodliness.

On this class of sinners then, as well as on those who barter their hopes of heaven, for a brief enjoyment of the fading treasures of the world, the apostle denounces a fearful vengeance. But from the dark and gloomy contemplation of such fatal enormities, he turns with delight and comfort to those, whom his zeal and teaching had rescued from this gulf of misery and destruction, to walk in the blessed beams of the gospel light. And whilst he gives them many an affectionate admonition to avoid the crimes, which are daily perpetrated around them, he not only brings to their grateful remembrance, the blessings which the coming of the Saviour had shed upon them, but he holds out, too, a promise of pardon and mercy, to the most profligate even of their offending brethren, if he will forsake the evil of his ways, and turn in penitence and sorrow to the Lord his God. As the inspired prophet, wrapt in the contemplation of the future glories of the Messiah's advent, bade the children of Zion arise and rejoice, because the Gentiles, those who had hitherto sat in darkness and the shadow of death,

were to come to the light which then should beam around them, and share its sanctifying influence; so did the apostle invite all, who were then wandering in the dark mazes of error and guilt, to awaken from their sleep of death, to fly to the healing rays of that Sun of Righteousness, which had already risen upon the nations, and draw light to their souls from his pure and sacred effulgence. And to this end, my brethren, the endeavours of every faithful minister of God's word are entirely directed. "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews still a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." In the honest fulfilment of our duty, the words of the first great apostle of the Gentiles seem ever at hand, to guide our thoughts, and furnish us with ample matter for instruction and edification. The exhortation, contained in the text, is one of those blessed admonitions which holds out the hope of mercy, even while they pass the sentence of condemnation; which, whilst they declare the degradation and wretchedness of our present low estate, point out a way, by which we may be raised from this gulf of misery and woe, to the blessed inheritance of the saints in light. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

The language of the apostle is clearly figurative. He intends not to refer to the natural sleep or death of the body. Christ indeed is the resurrection and the life; and in the great day of judgment, every soul that has ever lived on earth, must come before his throne for pardon or for vengeance. But although the sentence be not passed, until we have visited the chambers of the grave, yet is it fixed and determined in God's unchanging councils, ere we have shaken off our tabernacle of mortality; and if we do not turn from our sins and follies here, there will be no place for penitence hereafter. This, then, is the time to which every exhortation in the Bible is intended to apply. The menaces, indeed, of punishment recorded there, will be carried into effect in another state alone; but the incentive to obedience, which they were designed to afford, can act effectually upon our souls only whilst the door of mercy is open to receive us. This reflection is an awful one; and it seems at first sight difficult to conceive, how the servant can be found slumbering, when he knows neither the day nor the hour when the master cometh. Such, however, is the melancholy fact, and much is it to be feared, that of the multitudes of living souls who exist and move around us, few, comparatively speaking, are they, who devote the present time to the due consideration of the alternative which

eternity will offer. How many are there, even in the narrow circle of our own knowledge, who seem to live as though they never thought of dying, as though the mercies of redemption were valued not, or needed not, by them. Nor are they few in number, whose souls are polluted by the same crimes, from which the apostle warned his Ephesian converts; and yet we hear not of many of these victims of profligacy, who are won from their career of sin, and bring the offering of their penitence and tears before the throne of their Redeemer.

This, then, is the sleep from which we are exhorted to awaken—this the death from which we are warned to arise. And the very words in which the state of the sinner is described, are such as should excite all our fears, and call forth all our care. He is said to be asleep, to be dead. Now, what is sleep? What is death? In the first, there is a cessation of every active and discriminating principle within us. The judgment is entirely benumbed. God's glorious sun may shine brightly upon us; the fair streams and pleasant pastures with which his mercy decks our land, may look cheerful around our dwellings; but we are unable to rejoice in the gladdening beams of the one, or cast our eyes with delight upon the bright visions which the others unfold. And yet, though a mist, a dark and delusive one, enwraps

our senses, yet they are not without perception, however wild and fanciful it be. During the hours of slumber, indeed, the imagination is not unfrequently in full activity—unchastened and unrestricted by the reasoning powers—but roaming ever through scenes the most visionary and extravagant, and engaging in enterprises the most aimless and absurd. Yet, whilst our senses are thus enveloped in the veil of sleep, the strange and fantastic shapes which hover around our pillow, do not appear either revolting or improbable. We are perfectly satisfied, at the time, of the reality of the phantoms we seem to behold, and give ourselves up, as it were, entirely to the influence they do for the moment exercise over us, whether it be for joy or sorrow. Nor is it until the hour of waking comes, that we perceive the emptiness and vanity of those spectral visitations, which so lately beset us with their phantasies.

And does not the state of the unrepentant sinner, but too closely resemble the picture here delineated. Is there not a sleep upon his soul, which palsies every faculty, and shuts out the light of God's grace from his heart. The sun of the gospel sheds its beams of gladness around him, but they bring him no joy, no comfort; the river of life which flows by God's throne, is opened to his view, but it holds out no charm no hope to him. Dreams more vain and deceitful

than ever haunted the slumbers of the night, influence his conduct and direct his course : dreams of some fancied good which will ever elude his grasp ; of some happiness which he can never attain. Look at the votary of pleasure or the worshipper of mammon ; what is the object of their search, the end of their labours ? Are they not pursuing a phantom which is continually fleeing before them ? Are they not seeking for happiness, in a path which can lead them only to misery ? And remember my brethren, that pleasure and profit are the great snares which beguile men to destruction ; and that their fatal influence operates alike on all ranks and classes of mankind. We are all buried in the lethargy of sin, when our hearts are filled with other thoughts than those of piety ; when our minds are set on other pursuits than those of godliness. They sleep a fearful sleep, who are guilty of the hideous crimes which the apostle enumerates, and not they only, but those also who entertain no mistrust of themselves, no sense of their own utter unworthiness and depravity, no desire to please God, no hope nor wish for assistance from him. Every man, whose whole soul is not under the influence of grace from above—every man who trusts in the merits of his own righteousness, and hopes to be accepted by the perfection of his own obedience, is in a dream so perilous, that if

he be not roused in time, he will awaken only to the knowledge of his error, when the day of judgment and of vengeance comes.

But lest the name of sleep present no sensation of terror to the sinner's heart, he is exhorted to arise as it were from the dead. Surely, my brethren, this will alarm you. If, in your state of impenitence, you are likened to the dead, that state can be no safe resting-place either for ignorance or indifference. There is something awful in the very thought of dissolution; something that harrows the soul in contemplating the fearful change, which the blighting stroke of the destroyer works upon his victims. How soon does the worm of corruption prey upon the frame, from which the spark of life has vanished. How soon does that body, which was of late so vigorous in its strength, so proud in its health and manhood, become a dark and festering mass of decay and ruin. And this, my brethren, is an exact, though most appalling illustration of the state of the sinner in his impenitence. The mouldering and loathsome tenant of the charnel-house, is not so foul and offensive to our sight, as the sinner is in the sight of God, before his heart is softened, and his soul moved to remorse and contrition. This reflection may well make the most hardened pause for a moment, and consider what must be the consequences to himself, if he continue

thus to be an object of divine displeasure. If he has any doubts of the light in which God regards his unrepentant and careless servants, let him unfold the blessed revelations of his will, and he will find that such as turn not unto the Lord, with all their heart and with all their soul, are regarded as his enemies, and become, in consequence, the objects of his abhorrence and fiery indignation. He will see that, whilst any unacknowledged sin lurks in his heart, any evil habit is indulged in; whilst he does not feel the weakness and infirmity of his own nature, and anxiously desire to forsake his errors and withstand the temptations which beset him, he lives as it were in death, and becomes a prey to corruption whilst the pulse is warm and the grave untenanted.

This, then, is the condition of every wanderer from the path of holiness. The profligate and the dissolute of every class and kind, and not they alone, but the careless, the negligent, the self-righteous also, are in this miserable state of blindness and despair. From this fearful sleep, then, from this worse than death, the apostle calls upon you all to awaken. He bids you arise, he exhorts you to forsake the sins which bow your souls to the dust, and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Will you obey his call? Will you shake off the unholy slumber, which the charms of the tempter

have thrown around your senses? Will you burst the iron barriers of that living sepulchre of sin, in which your souls are now bound? Have you the wish, the desire to do so? Does the dread of God's displeasure sit heavy upon your spirit? Does the blessing of his favour seem pleasant in your eyes? But how can you flee from the one, or how will you obtain the other? Where God reigns, all is holiness, and happiness, and joy; and how, think you, may suppliants so polluted, so desperately wicked, hope for an entrance there? Who will give when you ask? Who will open when you knock? Who will give pardon when you seek for mercy? Jesus the Redeemer: the Lamb that was slain, will unfold the everlasting gates, and unbar the eternal doors. He died once for you; he rose again from the dead; and if you come to him, if you believe in his name, if you ask for forgiveness only in his merits, he will awaken you from sleep, he will raise you from the chambers of the dead. But you must trust in him. He sits in heaven, on the right hand of the Father's glory, to mediate for those who feel their need of a mediator; to cleanse from their sins those whose hearts are humbled and penitent; to shed the blessing of his Spirit, on all who sincerely desire to be so sanctified and so directed. This is the light which Jesus gives; and thus are they illumined who believe and

hope in him. Will you walk in this light? Or will you wander on still in darkness? Are your deeds so evil, that ye love the night rather than the day? The road to ruin is, indeed, a downward path, and you may find it readily if you will. But there is another and a brighter way, which angels hover round, and beams of light from God's own throne illumine. Thither let your steps be turned; go, and tarry not. Go, sinner, in humble hope; go, thou prodigal, who hast wasted thy substance, but hast sorrowed over thy days of misery and shame. Thy humble petition will not be disregarded. "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Hark! 't is a sound of gladness, of rejoicing—aye, of rejoicing in heaven—the song of angels round the throne of the Redeemer. And why? Because another child has turned him home; because another sinner has sought mercy and found it; because the dead is alive again, and the lost is found.

SERMON VI.

St. MARK iv, 30, 31, 32.

And he said, whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds which be in the earth; But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

THE life of Jesus of Nazareth, was, as you all know who have read your bibles, one continued course of beneficence and mercy. The very act of his appearance in the flesh, was an instance of love, beyond any which our imagination in its wildest dreams could have conceived. Some there are, indeed, who would degrade the Saviour of the world into a mere child of clay like themselves; a man, commissioned, they allow, from heaven, but still mortal and peccable as they are: Every page of scripture contains something to

invalidate these unfounded and dangerous conceits; and many passages there are, which, without testifying directly to the divine nature of Christ, do yet, by a natural inference, impress upon the unprejudiced mind this solemn and sacred truth, that Jesus our Redeemer is the Son of God. Amongst other parts of his character, which plainly evidence his more than human origin, his manner of teaching claims our most serious notice, both on account of the authority with which he delivered his precepts, and the new and extraordinary channel by which his instruction was conveyed. At present, however, I would confine the short observations, which the limits of a discourse like this will permit me to make, to the parables and similies used by our Lord, as being more immediately connected with the subject before us. On their justness and beauty I will not now enlarge; no one can peruse them carefully, without perceiving their excellence in these respects. But I would call your attention, on this occasion, to a circumstance not so obvious as the last, but more impressive even than that, when it is once understood. I allude to the wonderful manner, in which the things of heaven are likened to the things of earth. Matters of the mightiest import—the mysteries of God's government; the economy of his providence; the operations of his spirit; are all shadowed forth in some pic-

ture of earthly colouring. The eternal happiness of the good, the never ending sorrows of the wicked, are brought home to our imaginations, by some of the frailest and most short-lived of nature's productions. No soul of merely mortal powers, no wisdom of earth, however high its order, could have so compared eternity with a moment, or things unseen and unapproachable, with those which we daily witness, and amongst which we live. The kingdom of heaven and a grain of mustard seed, would, if considered in their resemblance by the wisest of the sons of men, have presented but a feeble picture, if not an absolute absurdity. Yet, in our Saviour's hands, how important and consolatory a lesson do we learn from the comparison. Let us then, whilst our hearts are filled with admiration at the heavenly wisdom, which could thus instruct and edify by means apparently so humble, endeavour with God's blessing to unfold our Saviour's parable, and receive the truths it conveys with gratitude and obedience.

“The kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed, which when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds which be in the earth: but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it!” In our own climate, the

plant alluded to above, does not grow to any extraordinary size; but in eastern countries, it is met with large enough to afford the traveller shelter beneath its foliage. These expressions "the kingdom of God," and "the kingdom of heaven," for they both signify the same thing, which are of such frequent occurrence in scripture, are used in two different senses. They sometimes denote the kingdom of God's everlasting rest, the happiness reserved in heaven, for those who have been his faithful servants on earth. But they are, at least, as frequently employed to denote that spiritual rule, which the Messiah came down to establish in the world, that gospel kingdom under whose blessed influence, both Jew and Gentile were to be converted and saved. In this latter sense we must understand the passage before us; it was spoken of the small beginning and rapid growth of the Christian faith; with a reference probably to its future prevalence over all the nations of the earth.

When we consider the humble means, by which the doctrines of the blessed Jesus were first propagated in the world; when we carry our thoughts back to the days of the apostles, and the nations through which they travelled; when we meditate upon the dangers they dared, and the persecutions they endured, in the exercise of their sacred ministry; a feeling of awe and astonish-

mankind, the whole land of Palestine, the lesser Asia, the chief cities of Syria, and the adjacent countries; the coast of Africa, the polished lands of Greece, and even the mistress of the world herself, had bent before a power more mighty than their own. The pagan annalists of those times, lament the decay of their own unhallowed rites. They complain that the Christians were found dispersed in numbers through all the land; that they abounded in their cities and their towns; in the crowded resorts of man, and the retirement and solitude of the mountain and the forest; that they were of all ages, ranks, and conditions; that they numbered amongst their brethren, not the poor and ignorant alone, but the wealthy and powerful upon earth. They bewail, in consequence, the desertion of the temples, the neglect of the sacred solemnities, and the falling off of the market in which victims were sold for their sacrifices.

Much more might be said on this pleasing and interesting subject. The records of antiquity which refer to the extraordinary growth of Christianity, are abundant and decisive. But enough has been advanced to illustrate our Saviour's parable, and to shew how close a likeness the picture was of the reality. The tree, when it has reached its largest growth, when its branches are spread over the plains, when it affords shelter

and shade to those, whose slightest effort might, but for God's protecting care, have crushed its infant blossoming to dust, is well chosen to shadow forth the wonderful increase of our holy faith, through the fostering culture of the same Almighty hand. When the blessed seed of Christianity was first scattered upon the soil, men mocked at the sower and the grain; can any thing good come out of Nazareth, was the senseless and insulting cry? But the good work went on, and through evil report and good report, through wounds, and persecutions, and death, did the first glorious labourers in the vineyard spread the germs of righteousness abroad. God shed the sunbeams of his favour, the dews of his blessing, upon the sacred plant. He guarded its earliest growth with his almighty hand; he suffered neither the beasts of the field to devour it, nor the wild boar of the forest to root it up. It flourished under his watchful protection; the thorns, and brambles, and noxious herbage, which had striven to choke and stifle it by their unholy growth, withered away and perished beneath its shade. It grew on and on, my brethren; centuries rolled away, and still that beauteous tree grew on. For a time, indeed, a long and dreary interval, a blighting mildew hung upon its branches, and fed upon its vigour and its strength. The verdure and the freshness of its leaves de-

cayed; a false and unnatural hue sat upon its foliage, and obscured the brightness of its natural beauty. For man had deemed, in his impiety, that he could improve the glorious culture; he fancied that he could engraft other scions, which sprung from stocks of merely earthly lineage, upon that tree of heaven, which God's own hand had planted. He did engraft, he dared to pollute this tree of life, with branches which he had plucked from his own wilderness of weeds. And when these accursed shoots sprung forth: when they shot their unsightly luxuriance to the sky, or twined, like some blighting serpent, round the trunk which fed their worthless growth, he tended and fostered them with the most anxious care. The rain from heaven fell not indeed, the light from heaven beamed not upon their poisonous leaves: but man hoped to remedy this deficiency, and he refreshed them with waters from an earthly fountain, and warmed them with the glow of an earthly fire.

But though God, for his punishment, permitted this unholy work to flourish for a season; though the plant of heaven seemed blighted, and its pride and beauty obscured; yet it was but a temporary withering. Some shoots there were, that struggled against the parasites, which wound their deadly folds around their stems, and fed upon their strength and life. On these blessed

branches, the God of mercy shed his drops of fatness, and gave them strength to shake off the poisonous excrescencies, by which they had been oppressed. The tree revived again, and though some fair and goodly boughs are still bent down by this rank and unseemly herbage ; yet the time will come, it may be near at hand, when it will again stand forth, and dispense health and shelter to all the plains around. To drop the metaphor ; the religion of Jesus which seemed so feeble at its first establishment, has now become the prevailing creed of all the civilized parts of the earth. Regions which the feet of the first apostles never trod, of which neither themselves nor their countrymen had ever heard, bow before the name of him who died on Calvary.

But whilst the sincere believer finds much to console and gladden his heart, in the contemplation of this wonderful propagation of Christianity ; the infidel attacks its truth, because it has not been more rapid and universal in its increase. If, he exclaims, your religion be really true, if it does indeed proceed from God, and is calculated to promote the happiness of man, why are so many nations ignorant even of its existence ? The question is an insidious one, and seems at first sight to carry a difficulty. But if we compare the issue, in this case, with the operations of God's providence in his other dealings with

his creatures, we shall find the same result occurring in all. When the sceptic proposes to us a question similar to the above, we may fairly retaliate, and ask in turn, how it happens, that the Deity has established such an astonishing difference between these nations of our earth? Why the blessings of civilization and refinement, with the various arts and elegancies of life, should be bestowed upon some, whilst others are left to the most hideous superstition and the darkest barbarity? We ourselves were not always what we now are. When the Roman legions first invaded our island, they were struck by the painted bodies and savage manners of our ancestors. Our present frame of society has been produced by slow and almost imperceptible gradations. And such is the case with every material change which takes place in the world. We have no reason, then, to expect that the progress of religious knowledge would be regulated by different principles. Without indeed some standing miracle, by which its truth and divine origin might be constantly attested, it must be left to make its way gradually and slowly. We know, however, that a time will come, when the tree of the gospel, thus sown in obscurity and danger—thus limited in its early growth—thus assailed as it is in these our days, will spread its branches over every nation of the earth. To this bright and

glorious consummation, the Saviour doubtless referred, when he spoke of the wide extent and prevalence of the gospel. The means by which this gracious purpose is to be accomplished, are hidden from our view. But though we may not hope to penetrate the mysteries of God's future dispensations, yet are we bound to give our most serious attention to those under which we dwell. The kingdom of God is come upon us; the glad tidings of salvation are proclaimed in every corner of our land. Have we listened in sincerity and gladness to their sounds of comfort? Have we fled for shelter to the tree, which has spread its branches over us, and endeavoured to preserve its beauty and increase its growth? Or have we spurned its shade, and fled from its protection? Have we madly braved the tempest and the whirlwind, rather than repose in safety beneath its canopy? My brethren, it will avail us little that we live in a Christian land, if the Christian graces do not flourish in our hearts. The name of a believer will not suffice, if the spirit and fervour be away. Happier, far happier, is the savage in his destiny; happier in time, happier in eternity, than he who lives in the light of God's truth, and yet rejects and despises it; upon whose soul the tidings of salvation have been poured, but poured in vain. As the kingdom of God will spread from land to land, until it has embraced the limits of the world,

so will its influence, if it be truly felt, fill our whole hearts with piety and purity. There can be no devotion by halves—no serving of God and mammon. If you seek God's grace in sincerity and truth, and that grace be given you, as it will be if you ask in faith, you must resign every thought and every affection to his guidance, and his controul. Then will his blessed presence so fertilise the soil, so root out the thorns, and this-tles, and weeds, which have hitherto polluted and impoverished it, that it will receive the good seed with joy into its bosom, and bring forth fruit an hundred fold.

SERMON VII.



MATTHEW xviii, 1, 2, 3.

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

OF the internal evidences of the divinity of our great Redeemer, numerous and powerful as they are, there is not one more striking to an unprejudiced and reflecting mind, than the perfect sinlessness of his character. Consider all those holy men, as they are called in the ordinary acceptation of the term, who are introduced in scripture for our benefit and imitation; and you will not find one, without some earthly imperfection about him, some folly or some frailty, which proclaim him an inheritor of the corruption of our first parents. Amongst the disciples especially, who

enjoyed the advantages of the precepts and example of their great master, we meet with instances of perverseness and infirmity of temper, of pride, of falsehood, and ingratitude. Their chief failing, and it was one which seems to have pervaded every individual of their number, was a craving for the wealth and dignities of the world. They inherited, in common with the rest of their countrymen, the persuasion, that the Messiah would at length assume the sceptre of an earthly kingdom, and reduce the rebellious nations to submission and obedience. The consequences of this belief displayed themselves prominently on several occasions; not only in their expressed anxiety, to be made acquainted with the honours, which were to be their reward in this empire of universal sway; but in many actions of their lives, which evidently proceeded from such a supposition in their hearts.

We cannot indeed but remark on the difference of their behaviour, after they became convinced, both by his own resurrection from the dead, and the inspiration of the holy spirit in their own souls, of the true nature of that throne, which the Redeemer came down to raise. His seizure by the messengers of the chief priests, and his consequent crucifixion, seem to have destroyed every vestage of hope; and when they beheld him, after an ineffectual effort on the part of one

of their body to defend him, (which effort he censured rather than encouraged,) surrender himself an unresisting captive into the hands of his enemies, they forsook him and fled. His death and burial put the final stroke upon their despair. They "trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel," and it was not until after they had seen him rise a conqueror from the grave, that they could be brought to acknowledge that his kingdom was not of this world, nor his a redemption from merely earthly bondage. But when once they *were* persuaded of these great and solemn truths, when the glories of a future state of existence were placed in bright array before them, how changed did they become from the timid and desponding fugitives they had so lately shewn themselves. How undaunted, how persevering were they, in the very cause, in which they had before displayed so much pusillanimity and irresolution. Theirs is an example, which holds out an important and most consolatory lesson to ourselves, if we do but read it aright. It teaches us how weak and unstable we are, when our hopes are placed upon this world and its unsubstantial advantages alone; how strong and persevering we may be made, if God vouchsafe to aid us with the grace of his assisting spirit.

To return however to the subject now more immediately before us, namely, the desire of

power and honour displayed in the conduct of the apostles; the circumstance which gave rise to the occurrence related in my text, affords us a striking instance of this unseemly anxiety. It appears from the parallel passage in St. Mark's gospel, that the disciples, during their journey to Capernaum, in which place the event recorded above took place, had disputed among themselves which should be the greatest. Eager to satisfy their own doubts on this head, they refer the question to our Saviour, each expecting probably to receive such an answer, as should favour his own individual pretensions. The expression "the kingdom of heaven" is intended to designate here, as in several other places of the New Testament, the kingdom of the Messiah; and was necessarily used by the disciples, in the sense in which they understood it. Our blessed Lord, far from gratifying this unbecoming curiosity, but in order rather to check their unchristian struggles for preeminence, and to undeceive them as to the real nature of his dominion, takes an opportunity of explaining in a most expressive manner, the necessary qualifications of those, who were desirous of attaining a portion of the honours of his future sovereignty. The lesson by which he admonished them, both of the erroneous opinions they entertained on the design of his advent into the world, and of the folly and wickedness of

their own unholy contentions; was singular, yet well calculated to sink deep into their hearts, and enlighten them as to the nature of that regeneration, without which they could have no hopes of acceptance with him. He did not give them, as would have seemed the most obvious method, a long series of precepts, by which they might train their tempers to humility, and become convinced of the mistaken views which they then entertained. But "he called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." What a severe rebuke was here conveyed to the disciples, for their ambitious yearnings! What an expressive intimation afforded, of that disposition and frame of mind, which God requires in all who desire to become his servants. What a blow to the vanity of the human heart, what a mortification to its pride, its self-sufficiency! Our blessed Lord selected as a candidate for the honours of his kingdom, not one of the rich, or the wise, or the mighty upon earth; of those who, in this trifling world, are usually preferred to dignities and powers; but one of the most seemingly helpless of its inhabitants. A little child was preferred be-

fore all who are ordinarily the objects of man's envy or respect. And the apostles were told, every Christian soul was told, that it must become like that of the infant pattern which the Saviour held up before them, ere it could be made a partaker of heavenly happiness.

And why, it may be asked, like that of a little child? In what are we to resemble a being utterly and entirely helpless: whose faculties are yet dormant, whose powers of intellect have not yet been called into action; which cannot understand its duty, nor distinguish between right and wrong? We are to become like the babe in its comparative innocence; in its feeling of its own helplessness and feebleness: in its entire trust and undoubting confidence in its parents' love; in its ready and anxious application to those on whom its young affections are fixed, for the supply of its infant wants, the gratification of its infant desires. 'Tis true indeed, that we are shapen in wickedness, that the consequences of Adam's transgression affect every heir of mortality, that is born into the world. But the curse of this sin, has, through the mercy of our blessed Redeemer, been removed; for "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Is there a Christian then amongst us, who does not ardently desire that comparative innocence, that freedom from actual sin, which in this world, alas! is but

the portion of our earliest days? We may mourn indeed over the marring of this fair image, we may look forward to the guilt and misery and shame, which shall cloud its opening youth, but yet there is a time, when the beaming features of the Christian babe, do seem to display something of their Creator's image. When the first energies of existence are awakened in the infant frame; when every sense and every pulse throbs with the new-born life; when the smile lightens in the eye, and the tongue is first loosed in unuttering, but not unmeaning joy; who does not covet the same guilelessness of heart, the same spirit of pure and unalloyed gladness? Visit that babe in its slumbers, bend over the couch of its infant sleep; how calm, how beautiful is the repose, which no dreams of worldly troubles can disturb, no visions of coming sorrow or departed joy invade. I have looked upon this bright and lovely picture—you must all of you, my brethren, have looked upon it, until we might almost fancy, that no inhabitant of earth was slumbering before us, that no inheritor of mortal sins and sufferings could wear a brow so unclouded, a spirit so pure. Who then does not feel the force and justness of our Redeemer's precept, that we should become in innocence like little children? Who does not feel that, in placing this example before us, Jesus proposed, as an emblem of what our own lives

should be in purity and simplicity, the only earthly model of Christian holiness.

That the guilelessness of childhood is soon lost, is a melancholy, but an universal truth. No sooner do the passions begin to unfold their evil propensities, no sooner do the lusts of the flesh and the pride of the eye agitate our breasts, than the day of our existence, which dawned so brightly, becomes rapidly shrouded in tempest and in gloom. And painful is it to reflect, that, although the sun which beamed upon its first hours, may yet at times shed a fitful and uncertain light in the intervals of the storm; yet will he never more shine on with the same unclouded brightness, as when he kissed the first dew-drops of its morning fragrance. Yet though we can never hope to regain the simplicity of our infant days, yet may we strive with God's blessing to keep it ever in our view; and widely as we have strayed from the paths of innocence, we may yet make the remembrance a beacon light, that shall assist us to retrace our steps, and prevent us from wandering further from the road.

But this, perhaps, was not the particular, in which the Saviour most desired to impress upon the minds of his followers, the necessity of becoming, in temper and in feeling, like the infant he had placed before them. There is another point, in which the spirit of the Christian should

become like that of a little child. The comparative innocence of infancy can never be regained, this other holy disposition, with God's assistance, may. We are to imitate childhood, in its sense of its own feebleness and helplessness; in its total dependence upon its parents' care; and its unhesitating and earnest petitions for help, where it firmly believes that help may be obtained. When the first gleams of sensibility are displayed in the opening mind; when the infant becomes aware of its own wants; with that consciousness, there seems to arise a feeling, that it must seek from others the supply for its necessities. Observe it even, after it has past through the first months of existence, and has begun in some respects to consider for itself; if any object of its young desires be placed beyond its attainment, how soon does it acquire a knowledge of its own insufficiency, how soon does it seek to procure by another's aid, what it is incapable of obtaining by its own powers. And such, my brethren, should be our sense of frailty and dependence. What are we but the veriest children in religious grace? The new born babe is not more helpless, than we are when left to ourselves. And yet, it is not so much this feebleness which we have to bewail, as our unwillingness to acknowledge its influence. If with the infant's weakness, we did but possess the infant's consciousness of that weakness, we

might still be safe. But there is a fatal sentiment of pride, or vanity, or some other equally unholy affection, which labours to persuade us that we are strong in our own strength, that we are righteous in our own righteousness. Look into the world, consider the various ranks and classes of mankind, and you will find in all the haughty spirit and the scornful brow. One poor miserable being, who has laboured hard for the treasure that perisheth; who has filled his coffers with the riches that decay; who has, perhaps, bartered his virtue and integrity for gold; looks down with contempt upon the neighbour who possesses not these temporal advantages, and thinks himself superior, because, forsooth, his garner is somewhat better stored. In like manner, do the advantages of birth, or rank, or power, tend too often to swell the mind, with ideas of fancied importance and transient eminence. But the man who indulges in these vain and unrighteous dreams of imaginary consequence, is far, very far, from that humility which our blessed Lord enjoins in the text. For, be it remembered, that the gospel spirit of meekness will, where it holds a place in the heart, influence every action and regulate every thought. It is not a meteor which blazes for a time, and then vanishes away, but a constant and unchanging light, which burns with the same mild and steady lustre, whether our

path lead us to the throng of the world or the altar of our Creator. This, like every other principle of religion, to be of any real value, must be with us every where. It must guide us in our intercourse with man, and our devotion to God. It must be accompanied, too, (or its presence would but create despair,) with a firm trust in our Maker's power and goodness, and in his will to succour all who sincerely ask his aid. And here again, the example which Christ proposed, comes powerfully to admonish us. When the infant feels its need, it seeks with unhesitating confidence the help of those who cherish its tender years. It expresses, by some significant signs, its little wants and wishes, and never seems to entertain a doubt, either of the ability or will to gratify, in the kind friend or affectionate parent. As is the infant's love and infant's reliance upon an earthly guardian, such and so undoubting should be our trust in our Father which is in heaven.

The gospel teaches us in all its parts, that we are not able of ourselves to do any thing that is good; but with this solemn truth it gives us the consoling assurance, that if we are but convinced of our own frailty, if we do but ask for aid from the Merciful and the Omnipotent, and ask in sincerity and singleness of heart, we shall not sue in vain. For every blessing, then, we hope to enjoy, for every good we seek, our supplications should

be made to him. For every comfort and necessary of life, for the air we breathe and the light which cheers us, we are indebted to his mercy. But there is a boon far more precious than these fleeting enjoyments. To us miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death, hath the promise of salvation been given. To all, my brethren, to all who acknowledge their transgressions; who repent and bewail their offences; who humble their souls before God; will he give pardon and peace. But the ransom which our Redeemer paid, will not avail us, if our hearts be still hardened, our spirits unsubdued. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Look then well to yourselves, ye that are high-minded one to another, ye who rely upon your own strength, and never ask God's aid, or God's blessing. Ye that are striving to excel in some matter of merely human importance; ye that would be great upon earth; ye that court the applause of your fellows, and then deem yourselves exalted by their approbation; in what do ye resemble the meekness and the simplicity of childhood? And yet you must put on these Christian graces, if you would become partakers of the blessings of the Gospel. May God then, my beloved brethren, so enlighten your minds to a sense of your evil ways; may he so fill

your hearts with the spirit of humility and devotion ; may he so turn you from the stubbornness and pride of this world ; that your souls may be renewed through his mercy, and purified by his grace ; that they may be refrained and “ kept low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother,” that they may in truth become “ like that of a weaned child.”

SERMON VIII.

HABAKKUK II, 4.

*Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him :
but the just shall live by his faith.*

THERE are gleams of the gospel light scattered over many parts of the Old Testament, which are too often overlooked by ordinary readers ; but which, when discovered, are replete with the deepest interest and consolation. They are so for various reasons ; the most important of which is, that a satisfactory and convincing proof is thereby afforded, that the old and new covenants both proceed from the hands of one Almighty Being, and are parts of the same great and comprehensive design. It has been repeatedly stated, that the Jewish law was but a preparation for the Christian dispensation ; that every part of its ceremonies and its ordinances, was intended to prefigure something, far more solemn and more holy, in the gospel institution. And if we ex-

amine and search into the writings of Moses and the prophets, every fresh inquiry will add to our conviction of the truth of these observations, and enable us to discover new links of beautiful and intimate union.

The one great doctrine inculcated in the gospel, is that of justification by faith alone, through the merits of Jesus Christ. We need not pause here in order to prove this point. There is scarcely a page in the New Testament which does not, either by immediate declaration or obvious inference, bear positive testimony to its truth; and there are few denominations of protestant Christians who are hardy enough to deny it, however feeble be the influence which such a belief exercises over their own hearts.

It becomes, then, necessarily a question of some interest, to ascertain what traces, if any, are given in the Old Testament of such a saving principle. We cannot, indeed, with any reason, expect to find justification through faith in the *Redeemer*, expressly set forth in the sacred records of the Jews; because the notices which are there given of the promised Messiah, refer rather to him as the great atonement for sin, than to the means by which his mercy will be made available to us. All we can justly look for is, a declaration that we shall be considered righteous before God through faith, and not by obedience. Now

we do not deny that this doctrine, though, as we shall presently see, manifest enough to shew that it is the everlasting purpose of God, is not very frequently, nor perhaps very plainly proclaimed in the Old Testament. But if we consider the subject attentively, we shall discover, I think, that there is design in this ; that one great purpose of the Almighty in establishing the Jewish commonwealth, and in giving it its varied and remarkable code of laws, was answered, by leaving this fundamental article of our faith to be fully revealed, under a future and more perfect covenant.

Of the various reasons which have been assigned for the separation of the Jewish people from the other nations of the earth, all, perhaps, in some respects, partaking of the truth, there is one not so frequently insisted upon as it deserves to be, to which I desire, on the present occasion, to call your most serious attention. It becomes not, indeed, such frail and sinful beings as ourselves, to attempt to pry curiously into the designs of the Almighty ; and probable it is, that, when the veil which shrouds our perceptions now shall be removed, when hereafter we shall see things face to face ; if any earthly remembrances remain upon our minds, we shall wonder at the vanity and errors of many of those visionary speculations, in which we, with so much fondness, occasionally indulge. Still, although we may not

reach the truth, our inquiries into the reasons of God's government and dispensations, when conducted solely with a view to his glory, and the eternal welfare of our fellow-creatures ; and carried on with an humble resolution to submit ourselves entirely to the guidance of his holy word, will not, we have reason to believe, be displeasing to him, nor unprofitable to ourselves. It seems not improbable, then, that one great and gracious purpose, designed by God in forming the Jewish system, was to convey to men, in all future ages, a lesson of the greatest importance, and, if it is learned, calculated to be of the utmost possible benefit.

There is a principle, my brethren, that predominates in the heart of man, and sets itself in direct opposition to the power and goodness of God. It is pride, which is ever persuading us that we are not the dependent creatures which God has declared us to be ; that we can please him by our own unassisted efforts to serve him ; that we can obey him as far as he requires to be obeyed ; and that fallen and degraded though we be, we are still pure enough to be accepted by him. Now, it is well known, that the Jewish law was one of moral obligation alone ; not so strict, indeed, as that promulgated in the gospel, but still evincing clearly the abhorrence in which sin is held by God, and the dreadful vengeance with which he

will visit all who are partakers in its enormities. It is also clear, that the rewards which were promised, were promised as a recompense, as a prize reserved for those who should be perfect in their obedience. Every means also were taken, to confirm the Jews in a belief of the divine origin of the Levitical code. God was pleased to descend in thunders and lightnings on mount Sinai, to deliver these his commands to Moses, in the sight of all the people; he vouchsafed, also, to be ever present with them, and to show, by the miraculous cloud and the pillar of fire, that he was indeed the Lord Jehovah, who had rescued them from the bondage of Egypt. We cannot speculate upon things that are impossible; we cannot pretend to say what the result would have been, had one man of that much-favoured but perverse and obstinate nation, been found, who had shewn himself, in every respect, a rigid observer of the law. We know that such never was the case; that no one of all the holiest of Israel was so holy, as not to have been a frequent offender against the precepts of his religion. The lives of many of the saints of those days have been transmitted for our instruction; and if we read them carefully, we shall find in all some taint of impurity, some foul stain of error and disobedience, which mark most clearly, how far they were from being the good and faithful servants they were required to

be. What an irresistible blow, then, was given by the Mosaic economy to that pride of heart of which we have just spoken ; and what an eternal argument, drawn from the best of all sources, actual example, afforded to all future ages, against those who should presume to maintain, that man can be saved by the merits of his own obedience.

In this point of view, then, no less than in the strength it has given to the great doctrine of the atonement, by its many prefigurative sacrifices, the Jewish covenant formed a wise and gracious introduction to the Christian dispensation. It was an excellent basis, on which to build that great fabric of our hopes, justification by faith through the merits of Christ Jesus ; because it proved, that no other means of justification were applicable to our depraved and fallen natures. And this it did, by furnishing a convincing illustration, to confute all, who, in their vanity and presumption, should be bold enough to assert, that man was capable of salvation through the perfection of his own holiness, when it shewed that the experiment had been tried, and had, as might have been expected, miserably failed.

The inspired writers of the New Testament make evident allusion to the Mosaic law, considered as the means of reconciliation with God. St. Paul, in particular, draws the most pointed conclusions from the nature and character of this

revelation. It was, indeed, a favourite theme with him, to contrast the state of man, when under the law, with his far happier condition under the gospel; to shew that the law could not have given life, because no man would have been able, owing to the perverseness of his own heart, to fulfil the duties therein required of him; and thence to deduce the unavoidable inference, that we can be justified by faith alone. In the eighth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, he declares, that "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." "The law was weak through the flesh," that is, the frailty of our mortal nature is such, that we cannot perform the deeds of the law, and thereby become justified in the sight of God. And in the third chapter of his epistle to the Galatians, he used these forcible words, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Here it is plainly stated, that every one under the law is cursed, because he is unable to fulfil the commands required by the law. And it is then intimated, that

a perfect obedience, if such could have been paid, might have been effectual to salvation under the law; but that no service, except that which was perfect, would ever have been received in its own merits. "And the law is not of faith; but, the man that doeth them shall live in them." But, at the same time, that St. Paul thus shews the incapacity of the law to bring men to righteousness, he speaks of it in those terms of high and holy commendation, which belong to so wise and gracious a dispensation. "Is the law, then," he exclaims, "against the promises of God? God forbid; for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily, righteousness should have been by the law." And immediately afterwards, he appears to draw the very conclusion to which I am labouring to direct your attention. "Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." For in no stronger light can the law be regarded as a schoolmaster, to bring us to the knowledge of the only means of salvation—justification through faith in Christ Jesus; than by shewing, as it does most powerfully, the utter futility of any other attempt to render ourselves acceptable to God.

This sense of the insufficiency of their law

seems to have been, by God's grace, strongly impressed upon the hearts of many of the most pious characters which adorn the annals of the Jewish people. They felt deeply their own degraded nature, and the need they had of strength and support from above. Hence the remarkable declaration of the prophet Habakkuk, given in the words of our text, "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith:" in which we trace an evident allusion to the presumption of the self-righteous, and a warning to all, that if they desire to be welcomed into the life to come, they must build their hopes upon Another's foundation, not upon their own. The expression "the just shall live by his faith," is three times quoted by St. Paul, in corroboration of his own arguments; and this clearly proves, that the prophet intended it to be taken in the same sense in which we have been considering it.

But a question of the last importance now arises. What is this faith by which the just shall live; what is its nature, and what are the proofs of its presence in our hearts? "Faith," says St. Paul, in the beginning of the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, "is the substance," or as the margins of our bibles have it, perhaps with more clearness, "the confidence of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." This

definition he immediately proceeds to illustrate, by adducing instances from the Old Testament, of holy men who served God acceptably by faith. After citing the example of Enoch, he observes, that "without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This, it must be remembered, was said of the obedience of the patriarchs of old, and refers, in consequence, rather to the light which shone upon them, than to that brighter effulgence, which, by God's blessing, has beamed upon us. Still, the nature of our faith must be essentially the same, although it will be enlightened by a more perfect knowledge of the objects, towards which it ought to be directed. The "confidence of things hoped for," the "evidence of things not seen," of which the apostle speaks, are, first, the firm persuasion, that "God has prepared for them that love him" a crown of unfading glory in the heavens, which they will receive when this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, and the dark vale of death has been passed in safety. But this trust must spring from a deep and fervent acknowledgment, that it is not our own hands which have wrought this salvation for us; that we are too weak and sinful to do any thing that is good; and that if we had been left to ourselves, we should, "without doubt, have perished ever-

lastingly." And, with this confidence, there will arise in our hearts a sense of fervent gratitude to our Redeemer, who has done for us what we never could have accomplished; who has, by the merits of his precious death, made an atonement for the sins, which must otherwise have remained unatoned for; and by his own sinless life of sorrow and suffering, has perfected that obedience which God required, but which we ourselves never could have paid. This does not, however, comprehend the whole extent of the Redeemer's mercy. He came, not to save us in our sins, but to rescue us from their debasing bondage. He died, not in order that the persevering and presumptuous offender might be forgiven, but that pardon might be granted to the pious and the penitent. He knew well, besides, what was in man; he knew that holiness and repentance are God's gifts; and he left us, therefore, his blessed Spirit to fill our hearts with those heavenly graces, which we can attain by his inspiration alone. To this gracious Comforter, then, must we look for that chastening of the soul, that humility and meekness of temper, that disregard to the things of this world, that longing after heavenly treasures, that sure hope of a joyful resurrection through the merits of Jesus; which constitute the truly Christian character.

This is the nature of the faith in Christ. It

remains, now, that we consider briefly what are the proofs of its presence in our hearts. And here, my brethren, let us not deceive ourselves, for it is a point on which many have been deceived. The indwelling of this faith may be as easily known, as a tree by its fruits. We read, that "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." Faith, therefore, worketh, and it worketh by love. It consists not in a mere profession of belief; no such declaration, however solemnly made, however long persisted in, will be of the slightest avail, if no signs of the humbled and grateful heart appear. For the due consideration of the manifold and unmerited mercies we have received, through the death and resurrection of our blessed Lord, must excite in our souls a holy and reverential love to him, and that love will of necessity impel us to practice all those duties and charities, which he has enjoined. And let us bear in mind, that although we may not hope to approach that perfection of holiness which he exhibited in his own character, and proposed to us as our model; yet may we, through God's grace, daily come nearer and nearer to the glorious pattern. And whilst we mourn over the sinfulness of our hearts, whilst we acknowledge that they are in themselves incapable of devising any thing that is good, that "they are deceitful

above all things, and desperately wicked ;” let us not pervert these expressions to our own destruction, and madly imagine, as some have done, that we can work out our own salvation without either fear or trembling ; or that, because God works in us, we are, therefore, called upon for no exertion, no vigilance, no painful self-denial. St. Paul declares, “ Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity,” or as the more correct rendering would be, “ and have not love, I am nothing.”

At some future period, my brethren, with God’s blessing, I may advert to this most important and interesting subject again, and point out the beautiful harmony which exists between St. Paul and St. James on the very point, in which they have not unfrequently been absurdly arrayed against each other. Let us, at present, ere we separate, deduce a brief lesson of comfort from what has preceded.

It appears, then, that God has been pleased in his mercy, for Jesus Christ’s sake, to accept our faith in the merits of his atonement, instead of that perfect obedience, which, however powerful it might have been, when observed, to unbar the eternal gates of God’s mercy, was a service which, with our imperfections, we never could have dis-

charged. With the most fervent gratitude, then, let us thank him for his compassion, and our Redeemer for his vast and unmerited mercy. Let us implore that Saviour to help our unbelief; to fill our souls with love to himself; to strengthen our trust in his promises; and to shed upon our hearts the inspiration of his grace. And let us remember, that if he does so visit us, and we may rest assured he will, if we ask in truth and sincerity, such an outpouring of his Spirit will incline us always to do his will: and though we may often err, yet our humble endeavours will still be "to let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven." In such a faith as this the just shall live; live in this world, my brethren, though poor and afflicted and bereaved, yet in joy and hope; looking forward to Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith: and they shall live hereafter, shall live through never ending years of happiness, in the presence of that Saviour, in whose intercession they humbly trusted on earth, and who now reigns on high, as he himself has mercifully declared, to welcome his good and faithful servants into the joy of their Lord.

SERMON IX.

JAMES II, 14.

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and hath not works? Can faith save him?

THERE has been no more fertile source of error amongst men, than that which has arisen from perusing God's written word, without that deep and solemn reverence for its contents, with which every contrite sinner should approach these sacred records. There are many who read the scriptures in order to support opinions previously conceived; and in the fulfilment of their mistaken purpose, wrest and pervert the text of revelation, until they make prophets, and Saviour, and apostles, utter doctrines totally at variance with the plain import of their language, and subversive of the first principles of the Christian faith. The Sadducees of old bore something of this character; they had determined beforehand

that there could be no resurrection from the dead, and they drew their scriptural argument for the truth of this theory, from the silence observed concerning it in the writings of Moses. But because the other parts of the Hebrew scriptures contained strong intimations of this blessed truth, the Sadducees refused to receive their evidence, and admitted, as standards of faith, only the first five books of the Old Testament. In like manner there have been, in all ages of the church, persons who, having thus mistaken the principles of true religion, have formed their creed on the fallible basis of human reason, and supported it by partial views of the declarations of Holy Writ. Others, again, who do feel a reverence for the truths of the bible, who do believe it to be a great and perilous sin to alter one tittle of God's law, fall into an error not so dangerous perhaps as that to which we have just alluded; but still full of hazard, and apt to bring great discomfort to their own souls. They build their faith upon parts of the bible, rather than upon the whole; they select particular passages from which they deduce certain articles of belief, without considering how far such a belief is warranted by the general tenour of the inspired writings. So obstinate, too, are they frequently in their prepossessions, that although texts be brought forward, decidedly contradictory to the sentiments

they have formed, they seek not to reconcile opposing testimonies, but cling to their first opinions, as though nothing could be alleged to invalidate them.

It is to the misconceptions of this latter class of persons, that I wish more particularly to direct your attention on the present occasion; and that you may avoid their fallacies, I would lay down a few plain rules, before we proceed to consider more closely the words of the text. First, then, we should remember that the bible is the word of God, and that since "He is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent;" we may rest assured, that every word which it contains is true, and that every part of it is written for our instruction. Secondly. This reflection should induce us ever to bear in mind, that we are to receive, as articles of faith, *all* that the scriptures reveal; and that we are not, therefore, to found our religious belief upon one portion of them alone, to the exclusion of the rest; much less are we to array the precepts of one writer against the precepts of another. Thirdly. When we meet with passages from different parts of the sacred volume, which seem to be at variance in their signification, we must consider that such contradiction exists only in appearance, and not in reality; and that although we may not here be able to remove the difficulty,

yet that, in another state of being, these mists will be cleared away—the crooked paths will be made straight, and the rough places plain.

There are, indeed, mysteries in God's revelations, which it would be vain and presumptuous in us to attempt to penetrate ; and no result probably would follow from such useless curiosity, but greater perplexity and uncertainty. When, however, we observe rules of duty apparently opposing each other ; feeling persuaded, as we must do, that such opposition can arise solely from our own misapprehension of the meaning of the inspired penmen, and not from any difference of sentiment in the minds of the writers themselves ; we shall act only the part of sincere and prudent men, if we endeavour, with God's help, to reconcile these seeming discrepancies, and by so doing, strengthen and confirm our own faith.

The words of the text afford us a striking illustration of this seeming disagreement in opinion upon the same truth, between two of the first preachers of the gospel ; and an examination of them will also shew, how little real contradiction there is in those parts of the sacred volume, which are sometimes in controversy arranged on opposite sides of the argument. And I am the rather induced to dwell somewhat at large upon them to-day, in order to redeem a pledge which I made some weeks since, that I would endeavour, with

the assistance of divine grace, to point out the beautiful harmony which subsists between the apostles, St. Paul and St. James, in those very points, on which their writings have sometimes been produced in support of sentiments of a very discordant tendency. The words of St. James, which I have already quoted, will seem, to persons who peruse the holy scriptures in a hasty and unreflecting manner, to convey the intimation, that a man is not saved by faith, but will rather be justified by his own works in the sight of God. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" This question is followed by a declaration of the necessity of works, in which they appear to be considered of more efficiency than faith. The example of Abraham is then adduced, who was "justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar." The harlot Rahab, also, is said to have been justified by works, "When she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way." The apostle adds, that "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

Now let us see what is the language of St. Paul, when treating on this very subject of faith and works. We read in the third chapter of his epistle to the Romans, "Therefore by the deeds

of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." And in the twenty-eighth verse, he thus sums up his previous arguments: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." In the next chapter, he brings forward the same example of Abraham, to prove, apparently, the very reverse of that for which it was produced by St. James, that the patriarch was justified by faith and not by works. "What shall we say then that Abraham, our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Having dilated through the whole of this chapter upon the case of Abraham, he concludes his argument with this inference, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

This testimony of St. Paul to the efficacy of faith, as the means of justification, might easily be supported by other passages drawn from his

writings; enough, however, has been adduced from the epistle to the Romans, to shew that he speaks of faith as alone effectual, through the blood of Christ, in making us heirs of salvation. We have, therefore, completely established our point, that St. Paul does seem, on a cursory view, to teach a different doctrine from that which St. James designed to inculcate in the words of my text. How then shall we proceed in this apparent difficulty? Shall we follow the example which has been set us by some, and adopt one or other of these seemingly opposite sentiments, as may be most agreeable to the dictates of our own reason? Or shall we obey the maxims which have been already laid down, and being convinced that there is in reality no discrepancy between the language of the apostles, endeavour, with God's help, to understand them both aright, and by so doing, to reconcile them to each other.

Now it is certain, that the faith as well as the works, spoken of under characters so essentially different, cannot be the same faith and the same works; because if we suppose this to be the case, we admit immediately the contradiction which it is our object to remove. Let us consider the design which the apostles seem to have had in view, in writing their respective epistles, and the difficulty will perhaps be much elucidated. There were amongst the Christians at Rome, certain

men, who having been converted from Judaism, had never shaken off the prejudices, which they had imbibed from the Mosaic law. These men, notwithstanding the positive injunctions of the apostles to the contrary, persisted in teaching, that the observance of the rite of circumcision, and the other ceremonial as well as moral duties of their religion, was not only necessary to salvation, but effectual also in obtaining it. These sentiments were cherished and strengthened by the unbelieving Jews, who resided at Rome in considerable numbers ; and who used every means in their power, to bring the Christians over to their own faith. The reasoning of St. Paul in the beginning of his epistle, evidently proves that his observations were directed against this twofold error. For he first of all shews, that the external ordinances were not essential to salvation, and then draws the general conclusion, that by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God. The example of Abraham was the strongest which would possibly be found to decide this point ; because the Jews said of him ; that he had been justified by his works, having fulfilled all the law. And St. Paul, therefore, argues the case at length, in order to shew, that his countrymen were mistaken in their conclusions, and that their common ancestor was justified, not by his works, but by his firm trust

in the power, and goodness of his Creator. "He believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." This justification too, having taken place before the establishment of the rite of circumcision, clearly proved that that ceremony was by no means necessary to salvation, that it was not therefore binding upon the Gentiles, and finally, that it was faith and not circumcision, which distinguished the true children, and the true heirs of Abraham.

The object therefore of St. Paul in this epistle was evidently, to set forth the free and unmerited grace and mercy of God; to show that no obedience which man could pay, would ever entitle him to that salvation, which can be attained only through faith in the merits of Christ Jesus. And this he did, with especial reference to the obstinate errors of those Judaizing Christians, who could not be prevailed upon to shake off the yoke of the Mosaic ordinances. It formed also a part of his design to check presumption, to bring men to a knowledge of their own state by nature, and of their entire dependence upon the Saviour's love, for that mercy, which could be theirs only through his intercession. We have seen besides, that the works to which he alluded, were especially the ceremonial and other ordinances of the Levitical law; and, by inference, any deeds performed in a self-righteous spirit, and in the ex-

pectation, that such deeds would be meritorious in themselves before God.

But there is one other point connected with this doctrine of the apostle, which requires our attention on the present occasion, not less than the nature of those works which he has declared to be of no avail towards the attainment of salvation; namely, the character of the faith which he represents as the only means of justification in the sight of God.* And this will be the more necessary, in order that we may be enabled fully to perceive, that the line of argument adopted by St. Paul, is essentially different from that followed by St. James. For we shall presently see, that, as the works of which St. Paul speaks are not the works which St. James enjoins; so is the faith insisted on by the one, altogether unlike the faith which is made of no account by the other.

Now St. Paul has himself given us a definition of faith; it is, he observes, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." That is, "it is a firm and constant expectation of the things we hope for, and a conviction of the truth of things which we do not see." Now the blessing most naturally to be coveted by a thinking being, is a life of eternal happiness

* Some of the observations on faith in this discourse, will be found similar to those contained in the last. This was unavoidable, especially as some months intervened between the preaching of the sermons.

beyond the grave ; a state of being, in which the sin and sorrow that cloud his pathway here, shall be succeeded by the unbroken sunshine of purity and peace. The wisest of the heathens entertained an uncertain hope, that such a portion might be in store for the virtuous ; and they endeavoured by all the powers of reasoning with which they were gifted, (and these indeed were of no common order,) to persuade themselves and others, that there were happy fields, where the shades of the departed might wander, free from pain, and free from care. But they could go no further, and their hope was but a conjecture after all : it was not followed by the certain assurance of the good they so ardently desired. Then came the preaching of the gospel, and the poor heathen heard with a grateful and gladdened heart, the gracious tidings of salvation, and pardon, and mercy. Faith followed to give substance to his hope. The means, by which he might lay hold on life eternal, were set before him by the labours of Christ and his apostles. St. Paul in particular, exerted all his extraordinary powers, to enforce amongst his converts this divine principle ; and we find therefore in his writings, the most ample explanation of the nature of the faith he proclaimed. He taught that the blood of Jesus Christ is the true atonement for sin, and a belief in it, the only means by which we can be justified before

God; the only sanctifying principle which can renew and regenerate the heart. In the 3rd chapter of his epistle to the Romans, he thus speaks of those, who are received by God through Christ, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." And in the 5th verse of the 4th chapter of the same epistle, he declares, that "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." And in another place we read, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe." Now it must be evident to every common understanding, that a faith like this will influence every part of our conduct. The first emotions it will naturally excite in the soul, are those of love and gratitude to that gracious Redeemer, by whose unmerited mercy we are thus made the heirs of everlasting life. For who that loves even an *earthly* parent or an *earthly* benefactor, will not strive, because he does so love him, to obey and please him in all things? And therefore, most certain it is, that he, whose soul is deeply and truly penetrated with the remembrance of that mighty work of

compassion, which the Saviour has wrought, will endeavour to observe that Saviour's will, by performing with the powers which God has given him, those duties which Christ has enjoined, and abstaining from those actions which he has forbidden. And this we know from St. Paul's own language is precisely the faith which he preached. For in the 5th chapter of his epistle to the Galatians, he declares, that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." Hence it is clear, that the faith which he taught, was very far from excluding good works. He denied indeed that there was any merit in them, but he insisted upon their performance as strenuously as any other of the inspired writers, and maintained that every one who was renewed by the spirit of Christ, would, through love to him, inevitably depart from iniquity.

Having thus clearly ascertained the nature of the faith, which St. Paul declared to be the only means of justification; let us take a brief view of that, against which the words of St. James, as recorded in our text, were directed. Now the first point to be ascertained, is, the character of the persons who are reproved by the apostle. It appears clear, from the testimony of an ancient father,* that there were many in the early ages

* St. Irenæus.

of the church, who abused, and turned to their own destruction, the doctrines of faith and grace taught by St. Paul. These men maintained, that a bare assent to the truth of the christian doctrine was sufficient; and that, if such assent were but given, it mattered not whether the lives they led were holy or sinful. In obedience to these principles, they gave themselves up to all manner of abominable impurities, and brought shame on the christian name by their foul and pernicious heresies. St. Peter in his epistles, and especially in the second, censures these pestilent prophaners of the gospel purity in very strong terms, and expressly alludes to their having adopted the miserable creed which they professed, from a corrupt and wilful perversion of St. Paul's preaching. He says, in the 14th and two following verses of the 3rd chapter of his 2nd epistle, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless. And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

Now this review of the principles, which guided those against whom the censures of St. James were levelled, would give us an insight into the nature of that faith, of whose efficacy he thought so meanly. But we have no occasion to draw any conclusions of our own. It is clear from his own language, that it was a faith, which led to no holiness and purity of life; which permitted its possessor to consider himself as absolved from every moral and social obligation. He evidently supposes, that it can, and does exist, without good works; and illustrates it by a simile most forcible, and by a comment on the comparison, too plain to be for a moment misunderstood. Whoever has this faith, he declares, is like a man, who, if his brother or sister were naked, and destitute of daily food, would say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and notwithstanding would not give them the means by which they might acquire these comforts to themselves. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."

Now it is quite manifest, from the whole tenour of St. Paul's epistles, that he never contemplated such a faith as this, when he declared, that a man is justified by faith. No apostle has insisted more

strongly than he has done, upon the necessity of moral righteousness; and had it fallen in his way, to remark upon that vain and unfruitful principle, which St. James was called upon to reprove, he would have censured it in language as strong and decisive as that, which has been sometimes brought forward as a contradiction to his own teaching. He says, in the 2nd chapter of his epistle to the Romans, that "not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Again in the 7th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, he declares in the 19th verse, that "circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." And in the 13th chapter of the 2nd epistle, he uses these remarkable words: "though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." Now look through the chapter and see how he sets forth the effects of this charity, or love, for such is the true meaning of the word, and you will see immediately, that he thought as lightly of a barren faith as St. James did.

But there is another point of view in which it is most evident from St. James' own words, that the faith of which he spoke, was entirely different from that which St. Paul preached. St. Paul speaks of faith as a righteous principle, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that

justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." And again in another place he declares, that " whatsoever is not of faith is sin:" thereby plainly intimating that whatever is of faith, is holy. He enjoins the Ephesians besides, to take this faith as their buckler to guard them from the snares and assaults of the devil. " Above all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." And to the Philippians he writes, " I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Now let us attend to what St. James says relative to the faith which he reproveth, and we shall find that so far from its being a righteous principle, the very devils themselves may hold it. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble."

From the preceding observations, it has, I trust, been made clearly to appear, that there is in reality no discrepancy between the doctrine taught by St. Paul, and that inculcated by St. James: that in the passages from their writings, which we have placed in seeming opposition to each other, the two apostles speak of a different faith

and different works. For whilst it has been shewn that the faith which St. Paul preached, was a holy and lively faith; a faith which through the influence of the Holy Spirit, tended to purify and spiritualize the affections, to draw our anxieties away from the world, and fix them upon God's promises in heaven; we have fully proved that the faith animadverted upon by St. James, was a mere assent to the Christian truths, which wrought no change in the heart, and was so far removed from every thing that was holy and pure, that even the spirits of evil professed it, though they trembled. Again, we have seen that St. Paul spoke of works done in self-righteousness, in the arrogant expectation of earning heaven, as it were, by the merits of our own obedience; than which nothing can be farther from the true spirit of the gospel: whereas, St. James treats of those truly evangelical works, those Christian virtues, which are the fruits of a faith that worketh by love. Hence the two apostles, instead of contradicting, explain and illustrate each other. And we shall now, I apprehend, have no difficulty in perceiving, that the example of Abraham was equally forcible in confirming their respective arguments. For St. Paul it proved, that the patriarch was blessed, because his heart was guided and controuled by a firm belief in God's mercy, and an humble reliance upon his power to fulfil the pro-

mise he had given. And to St. James, it afforded the most irrefragable evidence, that a barren faith would be of no avail, because it testified, that the exaltation of Abraham's posterity was predicted, not upon the mere expression of his belief, but upon his performance of an act of solemn obedience.

My brethren, we have been enabled, I trust, to-day, by God's help, to clear up an apparent difficulty in the Sacred Scriptures; but we shall have gained little by such elucidation, if we do not, from the observations made, derive spiritual improvement to our own souls. One simple and solemn lesson may be readily deduced,—that we hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience; the mystery of that faith, which hopes for mercy only through the blood of Christ, and the merits of his gracious and continual mediation. When we preach this faith, we preach every thing that is holy; we preach good works in the only light in which good works can be acceptable to God, namely, when they proceed from a contrite and humble heart, and are done from love to that gracious Redeemer, in whose righteousness alone we may dare to present our imperfect offerings. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;” and without faith, our good deeds are but as dust and corruption before him. It is vain to assume the name of Christian, if we depart not

from iniquity; and when we see a man professing to be a follower of his Saviour, neglect his precepts, and despise his ordinances, we may well exclaim with the apostle, can such faith save him? Be ours, my brethren, that holier faith, of which St. James himself has declared, that they who are rich in it, though they be poor in this world's goods, will yet be the chosen of God.* Let us hold fast this faith without wavering; it will strengthen us in our earthly pilgrimage, it will comfort us in our earthly troubles, it will carry us in joy and triumph to our journey's end. Here we may be in mourning and sorrow; but a true faith can blunt the dart of anguish, can snatch the sting from death, and the victory from the grave. And if St. Paul has this day been, under God, a light to lighten our souls to the knowledge of the truth; oh! may each of us, when the hour of his last mortal agony is at hand, be enabled to exclaim with him, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

* James ii, 5.

SERMON X.

PSALM XC, 9.

When thou art angry all our days are gone, we bring our years to an end as it were a tale that is told.

THE shortness and uncertainty of human life, is a theme on which moralists and philosophers of all ages have been prone to dwell. By those who lived before Christianity had shed its blessings upon mankind, it was employed as an argument to prove the instability and vanity of the great objects of human ambition, and as an inducement to spend the brief span of existence, in the enjoyment of such pleasures, as might make life's little day pass cheerfully along. Men were enjoined to consider the present hour, as the only one they could call their own; to seize the gratifications that were within their grasp, and not to suffer their anxiety for the future, to mar or prevent the happiness of the time before them. They were reminded, that the path of death

passes alike through the palace of the prince, and the cottage of the peasant; that his scythe mows down in indiscriminating havoc, the mighty as well as the weak, the young and vigorous, as well as the aged and infirm; that wealth and honours, are but feeble barriers against his approach, and that sooner or later, we must all fall beneath his unsparing hand. By the teachers of the Jewish, and especially of the Christian dispensation, these considerations were urged with an energy, which might awaken reflection in the breast of the most thoughtless. For their hearts were inspired by motives, of a far higher and holier nature, than those by which the heathen sensualist was instigated. The shortness of our sojourn here, was insisted on, not as a reason for indulging the more freely in the passing pleasures of the world, but as an inducement to despise them altogether. The uncertainty of the hour at which we may be called away, was again and again brought forward, as an awful confirmation of the necessity of being always prepared to receive the inevitable summons. Men were also told, that however brief their earthly pilgrimage might be, it was all the time that would be allowed them to prepare for the concerns of eternity; and that that eternity would be happy or miserable as they should here embrace or reject the offered mercies of God.

These arguments are in no degree weakened by the lapse of ages ; they press home upon our hearts and consciences, as forcibly as they did upon those of the persons, to whom they were first addressed. If time has had any influence upon them, it has been to confirm rather than to weaken, by affording so many additional proofs of their validity. Every revolving year, as it rolls away, leaves behind it a mournful record, of the frailty and instability of human hopes and human fears. It tells us of the mighty laid low, of the ambitious humbled to the dust, of the possessions of the rich reduced to a few feet of barren clay, of the pomp and splendour of the proud, changed into the trappings of the hearse, and the blazonry of the escutcheons of death. These reflections are peculiarly forced upon us, when we look back upon the year which has just expired.* It has taught us a lesson which we shall all do well to lay to heart ; that however exalted our worldly station may be, however we may be surrounded by those advantages in which we are but too apt to place our hopes of happiness, all will be insufficient to protect us, even for a moment, from the hand of the destroyer. Not many months have passed, since England beheld another monarch, gathered to the tomb of his Fathers. We

* This sermon was written for the first Sunday of the year 1831, being the year after the death of George IV.

followed, in imagination at least, the long procession of his funeral array. We beheld the vain splendours, which hung, as though in mockery, around his tomb, and heard a voice proclaim, that the festering mass within, had once ranked amongst the mightiest princes of the earth. Had we then suffered our thoughts to wander back a few short years, they would have rested on a pageant, scarcely more gorgeous indeed, but which breathed of nothing but life and joy. There were the same actors on the scene, prepared to pay their appointed services to the same prince. But how different the duties which they came to perform. In one case, they were summoned to offer their homage to a living king, in the other to consign his ashes to the grave; in one, to bind around his brows, the glittering diadem of a mighty empire; in the other, to encircle them with the cypress wreath of death. So nearly connected, my brethren, is earthly glory with earthly nothingness. But has this instance of the vanity of human grandeur, and of the uncertainty of human life, produced any effectual impression upon our minds? Has it taught us to view the allurements of power and wealth in their proper light? Has it induced us to set our affections on things above, rather than on the frail and perishable possessions of earth? Perhaps we imagined that in our humbler walk of life, the presence of

death in the chambers of our princes, held out no warning to ourselves. Perhaps we fancied, that when his desolating steps were seen within our palace-gates, our own lowlier abodes might be spared from his wasting visitations? But alas! has this been the case? Has not the destroying angel been busy around us? Have we no friend to lament, no parent nor child to deplore? Have the ties of affection remained unbroken? Has no link been severed from the chain of social love? Even within the narrow circle of our weekly assemblage for the duties of public worship, does the eye miss no countenance, on which it had long been accustomed to rest? Is no voice silent, which had duly, every revolving sabbath, joined in the common sacrifice of prayer and praise? Do we trust in our youth and strength? Do we expect to ward off the assaults of death, by the vigour and activity of our frames? Or do we hope to move him to compassion, by the tenderness of our age, or that in his indiscriminating harvest, the green corn will be spared, and the ripe alone be taken? Has the past year, my brethren, afforded us no proofs of the futility of such imaginations? Do we know of none, who welcomed its dawn with all the buoyant aspirations of youth and health, who are now cold in the silent grave; the bright promise of their future years, buried in the night of the tomb, and

the light of their earthly hopes quenched for ever? Has not the lamp of thousands been extinguished, almost ere it had been kindled into flame? Yes, my brethren, since you last met at this season, the cherub smile of infancy, the generous glow of youth, the vigorous arm of manhood, as well as the weakness of declining age, have become the prey of the spoiler. "Yet, strange, the living lay it not to heart." The instruction which such fearful lessons are calculated to convey, seldom sinks deep into our minds. We see our friends and acquaintance fall around us, like leaves before the autumn blast, and yet take no warning from their fate. Each succeeding year reduces the circle within still narrower limits, and yet we deem ourselves secure. We are cased it would seem in armour of proof. The arrow that flieth by night, and the pestilence that walketh in noon-day, have no terrors for us. But the fate of those who are gone before, affords us an awful proof of the fallibility of such dreams of exclusive privilege.

Shall we not then profit by their error, instead of becoming the dupe of it ourselves? Shall we not be prepared for the summons, whenever it may arrive, rather than be surprised in an hour when we are not aware? Shall we not watch and pray, that we may be ready at the master's coming? It is a fearful thing, my brethren, to

fall unprepared into the hands of the living God ; to be called before his tribunal, with our sins around us, unrepented of and unforgiven. Yet to this dreadful alternative we must all submit, if we persist in our heedless career, regardless of his menaces or his invitations. This life is a state of probation and self-denial. We are placed here, not to consider the world as our only home, our first and final resting place ; but as a preparation for another and a better state of existence. We are surrounded indeed by allurements and temptations, but we may not yield to their witcheries and intoxications, which beguile only to betray. We are commonly, indeed, blind to this inevitable result of earthly indulgence ; we will not see in guilt, that its end is misery. But enquire, I beseech you, for yourselves. Ask those who have drank the deepest of the cup of sinful pleasures, what has been the fruit of their excesses ? Have they derived the satisfaction which they had anticipated ? Does no remorse for talents wasted, and time mispent, ever intrude upon their hours of mirth ? Are their slumbers unbroken by visions of evil perpetrated, and of injuries inflicted ? Does not the curse of the friendless and forsaken, sit heavy on the soul of him who has made them destitute ? Do not the wrongs of the widow and the orphan, press with fearful force upon the conscience of the oppressor

and the false-hearted? When the accents of prayer and thanksgiving fall upon the ears of one who is an alien from God's service, does no pang follow the reflection, that he has never prayed? Will the pillow of sickness be smoothed, or the bed of death made tranquil, when the sufferer remembers that he has made no peace with God, that he has laid up no treasures in heaven? Are sins unatoned for, guilt unpardoned, fit ministers to herald the departing soul into the presence of its Maker? If there be one here present, who has lived till this hour in unthinking and careless security; "who has forsaken the guide of his youth, and forgotten the covenant of his God;" to whom each revolving year, has been marked only by deeper and blacker guilt; I implore him to pause one moment, ere he advance farther in the path of perdition. Let him consider what must be the consequences of his fatal obstinacy, if he turn not from his present ways. Perhaps he means to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, and then return to the forsaken temples, and neglected worship of Jehovah; perhaps he deems that whilst in health, and in the vigour of his strength, he has nothing to do with the sacraments and services of religion; that it will be time enough to become a partaker in them, when oppressed by sickness or bowed down by age. Fatal delusion! to wait for seasons that may ne-

ver come, opportunities that may never be found. Oh! let him rather learn from sad experience, that in a day, in an hour, in a moment, his place on the stage of life may be vacant, and that the sickness to which he looks forward may be the sickness of death. The destroyer gives not always warning of his approach. Many are cut off so suddenly, as to pass from a state apparently of perfect health, to the stillness and silence of the grave. Do instances like these, contain nothing to alarm our fears; nothing to remind us, that our own fate may, like theirs, be in an instant decided? Do we not dread that God, justly provoked by our lengthened obduracy, may leave us to the guidance of our own depraved affections, and the sway of our own ungoverned appetites, and in the words of the Apostle, "give us over to a reprobate mind?"

The commencement of a new year, is a season which we are wont to celebrate, with feelings of joy and gladness; and to some, perhaps, the considerations which I have urged to day, may seem intended to check those emotions of pleasure, with which we generally welcome in this annual festival. But true religion has no necessary connexion with monkish austerity and gloom, nor does Christianity look, with an unwilling eye, upon those innocent and social delights, which bind man closer to man, which call forth and en-

courage the kindly affections of his nature, and diffuse a charm around him in every relation of life. The sincere Christian has many causes of gratitude and joyfulness; and these will naturally press more keenly upon him, when he reflects that he has been spared to see the first dawning of another year. He will remember, when looking back on that which has just expired, many instances of his Almighty Father's continual providence, many proofs of his mercy and goodness. In common with those around him, he has enjoyed all the blessings with which man is endowed, even in this dreary pilgrimage of sorrow. The sunshine and the rain, the summer and the winter, the night and the day, have performed their yearly course for his support and benefit. But besides these general gifts, he has been made, it may be, the object of particular mercies. He has himself perhaps been raised from the bed of sickness, or extricated by some unexpected occurrence, from difficulties which had well nigh overwhelmed him.

These are indeed fit subjects of rejoicing; but he has one cause of thanksgiving, infinitely more important. He has trod in the paths of salvation. Every succeeding day has seen him advancing in Christian piety, and becoming strengthened in Christian faith. He has felt the love of the Saviour active in his heart, constraining it to the

produce of those holy fruits, which never fail to flourish in a soil so graciously cultivated. He has cast the burden of his sins and his sorrows at the foot of his Redeemer's cross, by whose precious death and blood he hopes for pardon and peace. My brethren, if ye have so lived during the course of the year that is past, good cause have ye of rejoicing now. Rejoice, for ye are brought into the way of life, and have forsaken the paths of the grave. Rejoice, aye, even though ye be in poverty and distress, for ye have laid up much treasure in Heaven. Rejoice, for the lapse of time brings no terrors to you, death has lost his sting and the grave his victory. "Rejoice in the Lord ye righteous, for it becometh well the just to be thankful!"

But if on the other hand, your past lives have left behind them no records of persevering holiness, of evil abandoned, and good performed; if you have neglected the services and sacraments of your God; if you have broken his Sabbaths and forsaken his sanctuary; if your worship has been that of the lips and not of the heart; if you have respected not the rights of your neighbour, but have done him injury and wrong; you have no cause for gladness. Mourn rather for hours mispent, and time past never to return. Mourn, for the guilt of another year has been added to the dark mass of your iniquities. Mourn,

for every minute, as it flies away, narrows the limits of your pleasures, and brings you nearer to death and judgment. Mourn, for if that judgment overtake you in your present state, you are indeed without hope.

Yet, though you have thus misused the talents committed to your charge, though you have rebelled against your Creator, and despised his commandments, yet is this hand still stretched out to save you. He has graciously vouchsafed to lengthen out your days, to give you this present time, that you may forsake your evil ways, and repent, and return to him. Embrace then, I beseech you, the offers of pardon which he has made. You have seen the shortness and uncertainty of life, delay not for a moment your acceptance of his mercies. Hesitate not in your decision, there can surely be no deliberation between Jehovah and Belial, no choice between heaven and hell. Flee from the haunts of crime and the society of the wicked. Confess humbly your past sins to God, be strong in your faith in his promises, trust in your Redeemer's atonement for pardon, and implore the aid of his Holy Spirit to guide and direct your path. Thus fortified, thus upheld, your future course will be far more peaceful and more pleasing, than the past has proved. You will be free from the remorse and anguish which dog the steps of guilt, and hea-

venly hope and ardour will be there instead. May God bless this feeble attempt to rouse you from your supineness, to a sense of your danger; may he fill your hearts with love and gratitude, that ye may so profit by the time still left, so by his blessing employ aright the year now opening before you, that when another shall succeed, (if your lives be spared till then) ye too may have cause to rejoice.

SERMON XI.



HEBREWS IX, 13, 14.

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

It seems to have been a principal object with St. Paul, in composing this most beautiful and impressive epistle, to demonstrate the superiority of the Christian over the Jewish dispensation. And this he does without, in any respect, detracting from the importance justly due to this latter ordinance of the Almighty. It was indeed a wonderful economy, and as the sequel proved, admirably calculated to fulfil the purposes for which it was designed. For however men may sometimes, in their flippancy and folly, amuse themselves with endeavouring to cast ridicule upon its many solemnities, and stigmatize its various

services and ceremonies as unmeaning and absurd, certain it is, that during a succession of many ages, it separated the nation who obeyed its laws from the Gentile idolators who lived around them; and preserved amongst them, in spite of their oft repeated offences and wanderings, a knowledge of the only true and holy God, whilst every other people on the face of the globe, were polluted with the foulest rites of pagan worship. It is a fact, I repeat, which calls forth our deepest admiration of the infinite wisdom by which it was brought to pass, that the Jew, far inferior as he was to many of the nations which surrounded him in all the arts and elegancies of life, as well as in the refinements of literature and science, was yet, in that knowledge which alone is truly valuable, the knowledge of the statutes and judgments of God, immeasurably superior to the wisest philosophers that ever flourished in the schools of Greece or Rome. Far be it then from the Christian's spirit, to think lightly of the covenant of Judah; or to attempt, in these later days, to cast one speck of darkness upon the disk of that glorious sun, which shone so brightly and so steadily in an almost universal gloom, that pillar of fire from heaven, which guided the sons of Israel amid all their wanderings.

It is only when compared with our own more blessed dispensation, that the religion of the Jews

is found to be imperfect and unsatisfactory. And this too, when we attempt to consider it as a scheme complete in itself, and not merely as the type and forerunner of a better covenant. In this latter light, and in this only, can we appreciate the harmony which exists between the Jewish and Christian dispensations. For much, which when regarded by itself seems strange and unaccountable, becomes clear and convincing, when viewed as a significant emblem of a fuller and more perfect institution. No part of the Levitical ritual seems, at first sight, more extraordinary than its numerous sacrifices. Almost every impurity which was contracted, was to be removed by the blood of some selected animal. It may not be improper here, to explain briefly the nature of that purification, which the victims demanded by the laws of Moses effected in those who offered them. And this the rather, because strange mistakes have sometimes been made, from not considering the real character and tendency of the various oblations, which formed so material a part of the Jewish worship.

St. Paul in the 4th verse of the 10th chapter of this epistle to the Hebrews, declares, "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Now Moses commands in the 16th chapter of Leviticus and the 30th verse, that "on that day" namely the day of expi-

ation, "shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord." These two passages seem, at first sight, to contradict each other. But the apostle, in our text, completely removes the difficulty. He establishes a clear distinction between purification of the flesh, and purification of the conscience. The truth is, that the legal and ceremonial impurities contracted by the Jews, independently of the punishment with which many of these defilements, if unrepented of, would be visited hereafter; excluded also those who were affected by them, from the society of the Israelites, from access to the tabernacle, and from the other privileges of the Mosaic law. And this was the kind of impurity, which the sacrifices of the Levitical code were designed to remove. These were the privileges, to which the Jews were restored by the blood of the victims slain. And this is that purifying of the flesh, which St. Paul contrasts so strongly with the purging of the conscience.

It is manifest then from the words of our text, that the sacrificial observances instituted by Moses, were never intended to cleanse the soul from sin; but merely so far to purify the person who offered them, as to permit him to join his brethren in the courts of Jehovah. Yet, although this was the extent of the actual expiation effected by the

death of the animals slain in the temple; still, even in this respect, did they convey to the heart of every pious and anxious Israelite, one solemn and impressive lesson. They taught him, that he had no power of himself to wipe away even those external pollutions, which arose from a violation of the ceremonial law. Had he been commanded on the contrary, like our misguided catholic brethren, to kneel a certain space of time, or perform any other similar act of penance, he might have imagined that there was some inherent holiness in himself, the merits of which would be amply sufficient to procure his own pardon. But a very different principle was inculcated upon him. The act of presenting the victim was a simple one. There was no painful service demanded; nothing which could lead him to suppose, that to the perfection of his own obedience, the remission he sought was granted. It was the blood of the victim that alone purified him. It was the death of the guiltless animal, an animal, be it observed, without spot or blemish, that cleansed the defilement under which he laboured. This reflection, which arises, I think naturally, from the consideration of the Levitical law, is fully confirmed and supported by the declaration of St. Paul himself, in the 22nd verse of the 9th chapter of the Hebrews. "And almost all things," he observes, "are by the law

purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." Now, if in matters confessedly of inferior importance, the Jew found himself unable, by any efforts of his own, to free himself from the burden of mere fleshly pollutions; how could he hope to be delivered from that deeper and more fearful stain which sin had stamped upon his soul? If he could not be restored to the privilege of worshipping in the temple, and associating with his brethren, except by the atonement of a vicarious offering; could he expect in virtue of his own deeds, to procure admission into the courts of heaven, or the company of the angelic hosts which surround the throne of the Almighty. I am not speaking now of the Scribe and Pharisee of our Saviour's time; of those self-righteous, presumptuous men, whose whole religion consisted in external form and ceremony, whilst not one particle of piety influenced their hearts. I allude to the true followers of the law of Moses, to those who considered this law as a shadow of good things to come, and worshipped God in spirit and in truth.

The pious servants of Jehovah then, amongst the Hebrews, must have been deeply sensible of the necessity of some atonement for their sins, beyond any which their own hands could offer. David in the whole of the 51st Psalm, expresses his deep sense of his own unworthiness, and his

reliance upon God for providing the means of his purification. "Behold, I was shapen in wickedness and in sin hath my mother conceived me. But lo, thou requirest truth in the inward parts; and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly. Thou shalt purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean: thou shalt wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." This my brethren, as far as it goes, which is in proportion to the light afforded, is in the very spirit and power of the gospel. What an entire absence is here of all self-confidence—all self-righteousness. Observe David's entire trust and dependence upon God. *Thou shalt purge me, Thou shalt wash me; not I myself, not my own hands.* Hear again his prayer for inward strength and purity, "make me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence: and take not thy holy spirit from me. O give me the comfort of thy help again and stablish me with thy free spirit." How fervently may the penitent Christian join in this humble and pious petition. We see the Psalmist imploring the same high and holy Comforter, to direct and sanctify his heart, to whom the Christian, by his Saviour's command looks for help and consolation. "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me," is a supplication often poured forth to heaven by the true believer now, when temptations beset and

troubles assail him, when the world in which he lives allures him with its flatteries, or threatens him with its frowns.

And this, my brethren, I think, was the disposition and temper, which even the Jewish religion had power to infuse into the sincerely pious and spiritually minded amongst its servants. The light vouchsafed indeed, though, as we have seen, enough to console the traveller, and point the way to the rest he was seeking, was yet but a dim and distant flame, when compared to the brightness of that full effulgence which beams upon us. Still it was an emanation from the same glorious sun of righteousness, which is now shining on our earth—the dawn, as it were, of that day which has risen so brightly upon the nations. Well then might St. Paul declare, as he does in the 4th chapter of this epistle to the Hebrews, that “the gospel was preached to the Israelites, who came out of Egypt,” when so large and important a part of their religious worship, tended thus strongly to impress upon their hearts, this evangelical truth, that they had no power in themselves, to help themselves, and that they could only be purified from sin by the shedding of innocent blood.

Had this foreshowing of the great and consoling doctrine of the Christian atonement, profited those who heard it; had it been received with faith

into their hearts, with what joy would they have crowded to the presence of that Redeemer, who came to fulfil these long promised, but unhappily, much mistaken mercies. Had the Jew, who ate his passover with psalms of thanksgiving, understood the true nature of the solemn service he was in the habit of performing, how would he have rejoiced in the coming of that paschal Lamb of God, who was to take away the sins of the world. How would his heart within him have blessed God for his mercies, in having permitted him to see that day, the distant prospect even of which, had filled his father Abraham's breast with gladness! Happy, indeed, is that Christian, to whom the tidings of salvation are tidings of great joy. They were alas! to the Jews a stumbling-block, and they are so to many an unbeliever now. And yet, as surely as God's word is true, so surely is there none other name under heaven by which we may be saved, but that of Jesus Christ. Search the sacred revelations of God's unchanging will, and you will no where find forgiveness promised, except through the blood of the Redeemer. Man in his miserable vanity and presumption, may devise other schemes of salvation, other means of propitiating heaven; but God knows of none. Man may give his wretched sophistry the name of wisdom and superior discernment, but God will laugh his subtleties

to scorn, and wither to the dust, the short-lived vanity of the worm who dared to mock his truth.

We need not look beyond this epistle, for testimony the most positive and ample to this precious doctrine. Turn to the 10th chapter, and you will find the following passage, "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins : but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." And again, in the 9th chapter, we read, "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Here then we have the declaration of our text fully confirmed and illustrated. Here is that corner-stone of the gospel, that rock of the sinner's hope, placed full in view before him. It is the blood of Christ alone which cleanseth us from sin. We ourselves have no part nor share in our own purification ; we cannot wipe away even the smallest spot of guilt which clings to our souls. Our redemption is the free gift of God, most undeserved by us, and too often most impiously refused. Yes, my brethren, it is a solemn though a melancholy certainty, that every man who does not accept with gladness these only means of salvation ; who hopes for

other mercy hereafter, than that which Christ has purchased for him; wilfully shuts himself out from the courts of heaven, and speaks peace to his soul, when there is neither peace nor rest for ever. That there are many who expect to live hereafter with the spirits of the just, and yet despise, or what is equally dangerous, neglect "the blood of Jesus," is a truth which cannot be denied. And there is too, a mistaken spirit abroad, falsely called a spirit of charity, which would refrain from setting before these men the fatal error into which they have fallen. But he is the truest friend, who will pluck his brother from the pit of destruction, even though he grasp him rudely; rather than let him sink in the gulf, lest haply he should bruise, in endeavouring to save him.

Beware then, my brethren, how you reject the only offers of salvation which will ever be set before you. There is a heaven above, and a hell beneath you. You do not like perhaps to hear the sound of this latter word, you think we ought not to address you in such plain and unvarnished language. Bear with me, however, for a moment, and then judge whether you should not keep the one in mind to avoid its terrors, as well as the other to inherit its blessings. You are all of you, aye, every soul, the wisest or the weakest—the highest or the lowest—the richest or the poorest—the children of sin; and, as such, the heirs of

misery and death. But the justice of God has been satisfied, and his mercy propitiated, by the blood of a crucified Redeemer. This is the doctrine and the language of all Scripture. It is the very thing prefigured in the whole array of Mosaic sacrifice, it is the truth taught by the prophets, it is the foundation-stone of the fabric of the gospel. Now it is by faith in the merits of this all-sufficient atonement, that we shall become partakers in the benefits it was designed to convey. Let me again refer you to the epistle to the Hebrews. Read diligently the long list of saints, who, in the emphatic language of the apostle, "through faith subdued kingdoms;" and then turn to the commencement of the succeeding chapter, and hear him exhorting all to "lay aside the sin which doth so easily beset them, to run with patience the race that is set before them, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of their faith." Read this attentively and seriously, and then say, where they will be found in the day of judgment, who build their hopes of mercy upon their own righteousness, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy, or a useless thing. What will remain for those, who thus crucify the son of God afresh, and put him to open shame; who, like the impenitent and unbelieving Jews, come to the Saviour's cross, but to mock and to ridicule the victim fastened there?

St. Paul shall tell you, "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace. For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

If then, my brethren, ye desire to avoid the everlasting wrath of God; if ye think that eternal happiness is preferable to endless misery; there is one way, and but one, by which ye can hope to become sharers in this joy. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;" and by it must you be sprinkled, ere your sin can be forgiven, or your unrighteousness covered. On this atonement must your hopes be placed. St. Paul tells you in the 3rd chapter of his epistle to the Romans, that God hath set forth Jesus Christ "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Be strong then in this faith. Let it rule entirely in your hearts; let it influence your conduct at all times and in all seasons; make it the anchor of your hopes sure and steadfast. The sins you have already committed you can of yourselves neither

wipe away nor undo; there they remain, burdening your souls and dragging them downwards to destruction. You must however cast off this fatal weight, ere ye come to the portals which open into another world. But how will you be freed from your load? Where will you leave behind that monstrous mass of guilt, which, if not removed, will shut against you the everlasting doors of heaven? My brethren, in your journey onwards through this wilderness of sorrow, you will pass, you are now passing, one bright and blessed spot—a shore of light amid the waste desert which surrounds it—a fair and sunny land, though storms and tempests howl upon the plains beneath. There stands upon it a cross, and a tomb. But the cross has no victim now, and the grave is untenanted. They are the earthly memorials of man's redemption, the symbols of God's mercy and a Saviour's love. There, my brethren, at the foot of that cross, at the door of that empty sepulchre, cast down the burden of your sins and sorrows, and go on your way rejoicing. Be ye thus sealed with the seal of the living God, and then hereafter, when your pilgrimage is ended and your labour done, ye will sing songs of praise and gratitude around the throne of heaven, and be numbered with those, who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

SERMON XII.



DEUTERONOMY IX, PART OF 14TH VERSE.

Let me alone.

NOTWITHSTANDING the vast pretences to learning which we hear echoing around us; notwithstanding the gigantic efforts that are made to communicate to all classes and conditions of mankind, an increased desire for knowledge; and notwithstanding the success, with which these extraordinary exertions have in many instances been attended; there is one point, and that of no common importance, on which the most woful ignorance continues to prevail amongst, it is to be feared, by far the larger portion of mankind; namely, the relation which subsists between man and his Maker. God dwells, indeed, enshrined in his own glory and majesty, and we are unable to penetrate, even in thought, the mysterious splendours which surround his throne. But we must not from this suppose that he takes no

concern in the actions and conduct of mortals, or that because he is invisible to them, their deeds and thoughts are unseen and unnoticed in heaven. For nothing is further from the truth. God has always, from the first day of creation, been ever present with his weak and sinful creatures. In the times to which our text refers, his Providential care over men, was shewn in a clear and visible demonstration of his power. The pillar of fire and the pillar of the cloud, were irresistible proofs that he did indeed visit the earth with the blessing of his presence. In the years which succeeded, the bright cloud, which continually rested upon the mercy seat in the most holy place of the temple, afforded a never-failing assurance, that Jehovah was still in his own sanctuary, and near to aid his people in all cases of emergency and distress. But when these miraculous appearances were withdrawn, when the cloud and the fire ceased to direct and order the Israelites in their goings; when, as it occurred in the second temple, no bright emblem of the divinity shone within the walls of the holy of holies; did God, if I may be permitted the use of such an expression, take leave of the earth at the same time with these representatives of his power? Was that intimate union severed, which had been so mercifully established between himself and the patriarchs of old? Were the saints

of later times cut off from the high and holy privileges of communion with him, which Abraham and Isaac and Moses had enjoyed? Did St. Paul, or St. Peter, or St. John, come before his throne, with a hope less sure and stedfast; with a confidence in his will to hear them, less ardent and less persevering, than that of David, or Hezekiah, when they besought him for aid and mercy? Certainly not. The faith and unfading trust in God which the Christian martyrs displayed, were in no respect weakened, because the wonders that had enchained the attention under the Mosaic economy had ceased from the earth. I am speaking now of times posterior to our Lord's ascension, when the apostles were left without any visible manifestation of God's presence amongst them.

It may here be objected, that although the apostles had no actual appearance of God's glory, to cheer and encourage them in their supplications to him; yet, that the privilege conferred by the Holy Spirit of working miracles, must have been a convincing proof of God's constant providence and care, and must therefore have given them greater confidence in approaching his footstool, than can be felt by those, to whom no such extraordinary powers have been committed. But this very objection proceeds from that lamentable ignorance alluded to in the beginning of this dis-

course; for it originates in an entire forgetfulness, that, although the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit are withheld, yet his ordinary graces are still shed upon the heart, and are as powerful to impart confidence and strength to the sincere believer, as if they had enabled him to give sight to the blind and speech to the dumb. In this view then there is the same source of strength and support, of boldness and perseverance, for the Christian to draw from now, as there was in the day of the first preachers of our holy faith. The whole tenour also of the New Testament, clearly shews that God exercises a superintending care over his creatures; not only over nations and large communities of men, but over individuals also. To this our Saviour pointedly alludes, when he tells his followers, that even the hairs of their head are numbered. Every good gift besides and every perfect gift, every thing which as God's servants we can desire, we are taught to look for from God's hand. The question then naturally arises, will God give us these blessings by his own fixed and predetermined decree, or withhold them from us by a decision equally unalterable, without regard to any supplications which we can make before him? Does he determine to give or to refuse, and never relax from his inexorable resolution, however earnestly his poor and penitent creatures may beseech his

mercy? Or does he require us to pray to him for his bounty? Is he willing to listen to supplications for heavenly gifts, when made in the sincere and anxious desire to obtain grace and help from above? Does he wait to be asked, before he sends the blessing? The gospel, my brethren, in all its parts encourages us to come to him, in the full assurance of faith, and to make known to him all our wants and infirmities, in the firm persuasion that he is always more ready to hear than we to pray. It is difficult almost, amidst such a multitude of testimonies as the Scriptures afford to this point, to make a selection; one short sentence however of our blessed Lord, will be amply sufficient to establish the truth of our assertion: "Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

It appears, then, to be the uniform language of Scripture, that we are to seek God's blessings in prayer; that we are to come to him with a penitent spirit in all our troubles, and implore his help for the relief of all our necessities. But whilst many perhaps, will acknowledge the truth of this principle, few comparatively speaking, derive that comfort and encouragement from their devotions, which we are well assured never fail,

sooner or later, to follow the outpouring of our souls to God. And the clear reason of this is, because we do not pray aright, because we understand neither the nature nor the efficacy of prayer. But it is of the most momentous importance for every Christian to have correct views and conceptions of this great and solemn duty; momentous to his own soul's peace and comfort here, and to its eternal salvation hereafter. Let us, then, my brethren, beg God's blessing upon our enquiries, whilst we endeavour, in dependence on him, to explain the nature, and set forth the efficacy of Christian prayer.

One great source of failure in prayer, arises from our anxiety being chiefly directed to objects, in which God bears little sympathy with our sorrows. Our thoughts are, in general, so much engrossed by the things of this life, that we do, in consequence, suffer them to mingle too deeply with our supplications to heaven. It may be indeed, that we pray for grace and strength, but our petitions for these blessings are frequently but lukewarm and indifferent, when compared with the zeal and fervour with which we implore our Maker, to remove our worldly troubles, or to send us an increase of prosperity. Now when our hearts are so far influenced by the world, that its uncertain and doubtful advantages are made the subject of our most frequent and most ear-

nest requests to God ; we cannot in reason hope that he will listen to supplications, which are offensive in his sight ; nor, if our prayers are also put up for spiritual gifts, can we expect to receive the grace for which we ask, whilst that which is earthly, still holds so large a place in our affections. Our blessed Lord knew what was in man ; and foresaw clearly how perilously he would misuse this holy privilege of prayer, by profaning it to the furtherance of his own carnal wishes and inclinations. In his sermon on the mount, he has given us the most clear and positive injunctions against this anxiety for worldly good. He has told us in what spirit our petitions should be offered, if we desire them to be listened to in heaven. “ Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat ? or, what shall we drink ? or, wherewith shall we be clothed ? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek :) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Let us then, bear continually in mind, my brethren, that one most essential quality of prayer is, that such things must be asked as are pleasing to God ; such things, that is, as he himself hath declared to be necessary to our everlasting salvation. We must pray therefore zealously and de-

voutly, for the gifts and graces of the Spirit, by which alone our hearts can be sanctified, and our affections weaned from the world. We must pray for repentance, for repentance is the gift of God. We must pray for faith, for that saving faith in the merits of our Redeemer's death, by which alone our souls can be justified in the sight of God. And with regard to our temporal state, let our petitions be, that, in whatever station or circumstances we are placed, we may be saved from the snares which are spread around our walk of life; that we may be preserved from the seared heart which prosperous fortune too often brings; and the chill cold gloom of despondency and discontent, which hangs so frequently over the cottage of the poor.

A second point, to which our attention should be directed, in considering the nature of this sacred privilege, is, that we must not imagine that God is deaf to our intreaties, if we do not immediately receive the blessing for which we pray. I am not speaking now of supplications made for worldly advantages, but of those which are preferred for spiritual mercies. Persons whose prayers are not quickly answered, are apt to suppose, that, because the strength and comfort for which they pray is not instantly given, God has cast them off, and will for ever withhold his compassion. Now this is a great and perilous error.

True indeed it is, that a man possessed of so perverted a spirit as this, may never be a sharer in those good and perfect gifts which come down from above; but if he is so bereaved, it will be, not because God has forsaken him in his need, but because his own sinful and wilful mistrust has hardened his heart, and led him to forsake the means of grace which have been set before him. The Scriptures contain many striking admonitions against such a temper of mind as this; many powerful exhortations to persist in our supplications to heaven. Our Lord himself, in his thrice repeated prayer in the garden, gave us a lesson, that we should never faint because our first requests are not followed by an immediate blessing. And he sets this point in the clearest possible light, by the remarkable parable of the importunate widow, related in the 18th chapter of St. Luke's gospel. If there could be any doubt as to the design of this parable, such doubt would be at once removed by the manner in which the evangelist commences the narrative: "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." The words which follow are most striking in their application, and although they are made by our Lord to bear a particular reference to the Jewish nation, and the fearful destruction then impending over it; yet is it evident, both from

the tenour of the parable itself, and also from the observation of St. Luke ; that it was designed to be of general use. “ There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man : and there was a widow in that city ; and she came unto him, saying, avenge me of mine adversary : and he would not for a while : but afterwards he said within himself, though I fear not God, nor regard man ; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them ?”

It was before observed that our Saviour has illustrated his parable, by applying it to the prayers offered up by the Christian converts, for relief from the persecutions and troubles to which they were exposed from Jewish and Gentile adversaries. But on another occasion, he has adopted a similar channel of conveying an encouragement to perseverance in prayer, and has deduced from the parable an admonition of *universal* importance. In the 11th chapter of St. Luke’s gospel, we find this instructive passage thus recorded. “ And he said unto them, which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, friend, lend me three loaves ; for a friend of mine in his journey

is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him. And he from within shall answer and say, trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." It seems evident then, from this language of our Lord, that continual and fervent prayer is powerful with God; that he does frequently withhold for a season his mercies, that he may try our faith in his power and goodness, and in the end convince us, that though he may seem to be far off, he is yet ever near to help such as call upon him faithfully. The disciples and apostles of Christ felt this precious truth, and they are instant in exhorting their converts to persist in their supplications to the throne of grace. "Pray without ceasing," is the injunction of St. Paul to the Thessalonians. And the Romans also he urges to continue "instant in prayer."

Here then, my brethren, we have every encouragement that a Christian can desire, to induce us to pray to God,—in the undoubting assurance, that, if we ask him sincerely and faithfully for spiritual blessings, although they may be for a

time delayed, yet, if we persevere in our requests, we shall not sue in vain. To every humble and penitent Christian then, who feels his need of aid from above; who desires to become a partaker in that strength and comfort, which the true knowledge of the Saviour's mercies never fails to impart; but who has not hitherto received that inward peace and gladness, with which the true servants of the Redeemer are strengthened and cheered, I would speak in the blessed words of the pious Psalmist, "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

The consideration of the necessity of perseverance in prayer, leads us by a very natural consequence, to enquire into the second part of our subject, namely, the efficacy of prayer. For on our conviction of God's readiness to listen to our sincere and constant petitions, must depend our hope and confidence in his goodness to hear us in the end. Now here we stand upon the most triumphant ground. We have in the Scripture such extraordinary instances given of the power of prayer, that we are almost unable to conceive, that God should so condescend to listen to the voice of his frail creatures of the dust. Take the words of the text for example: and hear the Almighty sovereign of the universe, almost, as it were, requesting his feeble servant not to inter-

cede for his rebellious countrymen. "Let me alone," said God to Moses. Gracious and precious words! Thy poor, weak, feeble creatures, may then, O God, if they come before thee in faith and penitence of heart, call down blessings from thy hand, where thou hadst almost purposed to visit with thy vengeance. In the case before us, Jehovah was most justly provoked by the senseless rebellions of his chosen people, no sooner had the commandment to abstain from idolatry been given, than these obdurate offenders made them a molten figure, and turned the image of the invisible God into the likeness of a calf that eateth hay. God then addressed Moses in those remarkable words, which I have selected for our text to-day. "Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they." As if the Almighty had said, your prayers are powerful to turn away my wrath, and if you supplicate for mercy, I can scarcely refuse to listen. Do not therefore seek to avert my just indignation upon this stiff-necked and faithless people: let me alone, and I will destroy them, and transfer to thy posterity the blessings I had designed for their inheritance.

These are gracious words, because they bring home to our hearts the persuasion, that in the expressive language of St. James, "the effectual

fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." But the most astonishing part of the history yet remains behind. The man of God, heeded not, if I may so speak, the desire of the Lord, but rejecting the wish for his own aggrandizement by the ruin of his ungrateful, yet still beloved countrymen, he dared to prefer those petitions in their behalf, which God had, as it were, commanded him not to offer. How few of us, my brethren, would have felt this confidence in the efficacy of prayer? How few would in this particular, have ventured thus to counteract the designs of God, especially when we knew that those designs would tend to promote our own glory, by the prosperity and exaltation of our descendants. And mark the result, for it will give confidence and comfort to every humble Christian; it will encourage him to confide in God's mercy, and to draw hope to himself from the loving-kindnesses which he shewed of old. Jehovah vouchsafed to listen to the supplications of his servant. He was moved by his prayer to turn aside from his wrathful indignation: he withdrew his heavy displeasure from the idolatrous Hebrews, and thus shed a blessing upon the firm and undoubting trust of his chosen prophet.

Can you desire, my brethren, can you imagine, a stronger proof of the efficacy of prayer, than that thus afforded by the words of our text? Nor

is it a solitary instance of God's readiness to hear us, when we truly call upon him; and of his gracious goodness in vouchsafing to turn from his wrath, at our humble and anxious request. The circumstances of Abraham's intercession for Sodom, are well known to most of you. You have heard how the patriarch ventured to plead with God, for a city abandoned to the most direful abominations. You remember how he commenced by entreating the Lord to pardon it that once, if fifty righteous could be found therein. It seemed a great act of mercy in God, to consent to this request; but if we attend to the sequel of the history, we shall see Abraham, emboldened, as it were, by every fresh act of condescension in the Almighty, asking still greater favours, and obtaining all his petitions. When he found that God was willing to spare the guilty for the sake of fifty righteous; he implored him immediately to extend his compassion, and for the sake of forty and five righteous, if so many could be found therein, to cease from his fiery indignation. When this was acceded to, he begged God's pity for forty's sake. This too was granted; but the patriarch ceased not from his pleading. He obtained that thirty would be accepted as a ransom to ward off the impending destruction from their fellow-citizens; then that twenty, and lastly that ten would be so received.

What human benefactor, my brethren, however kind, however compassionate he might have been, would have listened patiently to such a petitioner. For however anxious we may be to relieve our neighbour's sorrows, yet if one came to our doors to ask a favour, and when that was granted, asked another still greater; and so continued to rise in his demands with every fresh consent on our part; he would in all probability be rudely repulsed from our dwellings, and be severely rebuked for what we should deem his impertinent importunity. And yet we do not perceive in the narrative of Abraham's communing with God on this remarkable occasion, any expression of anger or resentment from the great Jehovah, against his pertinacious servant; although the patriarch, astonished at his own boldness, evidently stood in apprehension of such a result. And herein is another proof most clearly afforded, of the power of prayer when offered by a righteous man, and that it may bring down blessings not on his own head only, but on his brethren also who are yet in their sins.

Listen again to the value of prayer, as exemplified in a passage of the history of Hezekiah, related in the second book of Kings. "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amos came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine

house in order ; for thou shalt die, and not live." Yet this decree of God, fixed as it must have seemed to be, was altered by the earnest supplications of the pious King, and Isaiah was sent again to bear him the tidings of comfort. "Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears; behold, I will heal thee!"

But there may perhaps be some, who imagine that these instances cannot be made applicable to them. The persons hitherto introduced, whose prayers we have seen were so powerful in averting God's vengeance, and bringing down his blessing, were men who had never been presumptuous and wilful sinners, but had been eminent for their piety from their early years. The converted sinner therefore, who has lived long in guilt and forgetfulness of God, but who has at length seen the error of his ways, may perhaps imagine, that the examples of Abraham, or Moses, or Hezekiah, can afford no encouragement to him. Let us then select one other instance from the pages of Holy Writ; an instance which will remove every doubt from the tender conscience, and convince the returning prodigal, that his prayers too are mighty with God to obtain his loving mercies. Read the character of Manasseh king of Judah, as detailed in the former part of the 33rd chapter of the 2nd book

of Chronicles. He is there said to have done "that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel!" Then follows the detail of these abominations, from which it appears, that amongst other acts, he made his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom; he defiled the temple of God, by placing within it the idol which his own hands had made, and caused the inhabitants to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel! "And the Lord spake unto Manasseh," we read, "and to his people: but they would not hearken!" The wrath of God was kindled. The Assyrian hosts were made his ministers of vengeance, and the guilty monarch was carried away in chains to Babylon. But the day of sorrow and distress, became a day of mercy and of joy to Manasseh, as it often is to many a Christian now. His hitherto hardened spirit was softened, and he, who perhaps had never prayed before, "besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom."

Needs there any farther testimony to prove that God is ever ready to be entreated, and that,

as we have stated before, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much:" yes, that the prayer of a penitent sinner will be listened too by God, if it be offered in Christ's name? Surely not. For if such astonishing proofs as these cannot move you to pour out your souls in prayer, how will you ever be brought thus to commune, as it were, with God? Seek then, I beseech you, for yourselves, these comforts and blessings of prayer: but remember, that your petitions will not be heard in their own merits, but only for the sake of the atoning sacrifice of Christ Jesus. Be all your supplications then offered in his name, and through his mediation. Seek for eternal rather than for temporal mercies, and cease not to implore the blessings you covet, because they are for a time withheld. "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that he cannot save; nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear;" "seek him then whilst he may be found, call upon him whilst he is near." Be it yours to say with David, "As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice." In this entire dependence upon God, this firm trust in his mercy through Christ, you will seek him early in prayer and you will not seek in vain. Though the relief may not be immediately bestowed, yet be assured, that if you

pray and faint not, the same God, who listened to his servants in the times of old, who heard even Manasseh's request, will accept the incense of your sacrifice, and shed the dews of his blessing upon your heads.

SERMON XIII.

I JOHN IV, PART OF 17 VERSE.

Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.

THERE can be, I think, no reasonable doubt, that one great cause, which prevents men from being anxious to become the followers of Christ, is, the privations and self-denial to which every sincere believer is bound to submit, and which appear so painful to the carnal and worldly-minded. In the days when persecution deluged our land with blood, many were turned aside from the faith, by their dread of those tortures which were employed to try the fortitude and piety of its chosen champions. These times of woe and desolation are passed away, we trust never to return. And yet we shall not find, I fear, if we examine closely and impartially, that the absence of all apprehension of personal danger, contributes materially to swell the number of real and

zealous Christians. For we must ever bear in mind, that though we call ourselves after the name of Christ, yet if the Spirit of Christ dwell not in us, such an empty profession will avail us nothing in that day, when we shall flee to it as our last hope of deliverance from the bitterness of eternal death. But although by God's blessing, the rack and the stake are no longer permitted to fill our plains with mourning and misery; although these mighty engines of Satan's power have crumbled into dust before the sun-beams of the Gospel; yet are fear and the want of fortitude, still powerful engines in the hands of the great deceiver, to tempt men away from God, or prevent them from entering his service. They who are his servants, must keep themselves unspotted from the world; must renounce its pomps and pleasures, its friendships and alliances; must refuse to allow its pursuits to take possession of their hearts, and fill them with the lust of power or of wealth, instead of hunger and thirst after righteousness. To practise duties such as these, demands, from the holiest temper, many an anxious struggle, many a painful sacrifice. The flesh will ever lust against the Spirit, whilst it is enshrouded in its present tabernacle of corruption; and the contest with the powers of darkness can only be successfully maintained, by continual watchfulness and untiring zeal. The Scriptures

too, every where represent the life of the Christian as a toilsome pilgrimage; a race of doubt and difficulty; a war of danger and unceasing vigilance. Assuredly to the worldly minded, the Gospel of Jesus presents but few attractions. It condemns their pursuits as sinful; it denounces the idol of their worship as an agent of the arch-spirit of evil; a deadly foe, which must be withstood and conquered. By them, therefore, so long as they cling to follies and pleasures, thus at variance with the precepts of the gospel, we can never hope to see those precepts obeyed. It is when men forsake the world; when they begin to see the vanity and vexation of mortal cares and anxieties; when they become sensible of their own wants and imperfections; that they take up their cross and follow their Saviour's steps.

But though the true believer must expect to undergo many dangers, to be exposed to many trials, yet we shall err greatly, if we imagine that there are no comforts promised, no joys held out, to reward his faith and obedience. True it is, that the gospel does not say to the sick, ye shall be restored to health; it does not say to the poor, ye shall be made rich; it speaks not to any of perfect rest, or peace, or happiness, in this world. Its comforts, its promises, its rewards, are to be enjoyed in fulness in another state alone; and though they do, even amid all the changes and vi-

cissitudes of life, shed a calm upon the spirit, which no other power can give, yet they will not bestow their most perfect serenity and bliss, until our tabernacle of mortality has been dissolved. And this indeed, my brethren, is the period when the soul stands most in need of consolation. Great and many as the sorrows of life may be; heavily as the afflictions which beset us here may press upon us; yet what are they, compared to that fearful state of woe and misery, which must be the portion of the departed spirit, that stands before its Maker's bar of judgment, with no friend to cheer, no arm to succour it. But to this fearful ordeal, few of us, unhappily, often direct our thoughts. Whilst the blessings of health are shed upon our heads; whilst the blandishments of life pour their palsyng influence upon our senses; we seem to act as though we expected our days to be without number, our pleasures without end or change. The thoughts of death and judgment, are thoughts which either seldom recur, or if they do intrude themselves upon our hours of mirth and merriment, are rarely or never permitted to dwell upon our minds, and temper the unholy excitement, which the vanities of the world never fail to kindle. Yet though we strive to banish these unwelcome visitors from our remembrance; though we drown in excess and frivolity, the solemn voice of conscience which

tells us we are mortal; though, like Felix, we defer the consideration of our eternal destiny to some future opportunity, which we may never chance to find; yet in spite of all our procrastination and wilful forgetfulness, the steps of the destroyer, will one day, we know not how soon, be found within our dwellings; and however unprepared we may be for his coming, no entreaties, no supplications, will induce him to delay his visit even for a moment.

But this is not all. Death is not annihilation. If it were, the worldling might perhaps console himself in this time of fear, with the miserable solace of an eternal sleep. But the portals of the grave lead not, God be praised, into the land of nothingness. They are, on the contrary, but the entrance into a state of being, which will be without end or change. Yet is there one fearful trial, which every departed soul must undergo, ere it procures admission into those mansions of endless existence, which are to be its portion for ever. After death, comes the judgment. This solemn truth, is impressed upon us in every page of God's revelations; to it, as to a beacon light, are we directed to shape our course. Much more is unfolded respecting its nature and design, than is revealed concerning any other event or circumstance which belongs to the world of spirits. The judge of that resplendent yet terrible tribu-

nal is declared; the solemn splendours which will surround his throne of glory are displayed to our view, as far, at least, as heaven's magnificence can be depicted in mortal language. It is not hidden from us, that the earth shall open, and the mouldering tenants of her countless tombs, rise from the bed of corruption in which they have lain so long. We know too, that the ocean, that fathomless grave, whose mighty surface bears not a mound, to tell of the myriads of uncoffined dead who sleep beneath its waters, shall restore the victims, who found their last earthly resting-place in the dens of that Leviathan, which thou, O God, hast made to riot in its boundless wastes. These unnumbered multitudes will be ranged before that awful judgment seat, to hear the sentence pronounced, which will doom them to everlasting woe or everlasting joy. Amid these anxious and trembling hosts, must every one of us be found. We are all to-day, my brethren, living and breathing mortals; all probably forming our plans of future profit or future pleasure; all, I fear, too occupied in devising schemes, which have a reference only to earth and earthly considerations. Yet there shall we also stand. When that day shall come, no artifice can hide, no arm can shield us, from the glance of the eternal and omnipotent. We may call upon the rocks to overwhelm, and the

mountains to cover us, but we shall call in vain.

And where will be the fruits of those gratifications and engagements, which now employ so large a portion of our time; which draw our minds away from God; and tend so powerfully to banish from our thoughts, the remembrance of this day of his final reckoning with his creatures? Look at the man of pleasure or of ambition now. Where are the luxuries which have pampered, or the high flown hopes which have lured him on? In this hour of dread and dismay, spread the choicest dainties on the board of festivity; fill the wine cup with the most luscious liquors; gather the sensualist and the voluptuary from the assembled throng, and place them before the banquet. Say, will they taste it? Not one morsel, my brethren, not one drop of that intoxicating goblet, which on earth they were wont to drain so deeply. And if the aspirant after fame or human dignity, be called to pluck even a crown from the heaps of empty diadems, which the monarchs of the world have sought and worn, will he now seize the prize, so long and so ardently desired? It would be vain and useless here. It would be worse than madness, to assume the pomp and pageantry of earth, before the King of kings and Lord of lords. Look at the miser too; the man who has toiled and con-

trived, aye, and even prayed for gold. Has he brought his coffers with him, to pay a ransom for a life mis-spent? Place his hoarded heaps beside him; tell him of the fair and wide domains which once owned him as their master; and bid him seek comfort, if he can, in the contemplation of his wealth. Think you he will find it? Think you that the richest gifts of mammon, can buy one drop of water to cool the sinner's tongue? And the Sceptic too, the miserable unbeliever—where is his boasting now? He who once derided the revelations of his God; who dared to pride himself upon his own superior wisdom, and to mock the Redeemer even upon his cross of mercy; how will his impious railings, his fine-spun subtleties, support his spirit, when that Redeemer comes a second time to judge the world? His idiot theories might be praised and followed here; his wayward fancies might find disciples amongst the erring children of mortality; and the incense of their praise might shed a false fragrance around the path of his earthly wanderings, and fall even upon the silence of his grave. But who will applaud him in the day of judgment? Who in this hour of his last and longest need, will stand by his side who has denied and despised the great God of heaven and earth?

It is in truth, my brethren, an awful and an important consideration, to reflect that they on

whom the world is wont to look with esteem and envy, may be thus destitute, thus feeble and helpless, in the day when the master comes to reckon with his servants. If wealth, if pleasure, if all those thousand ends and objects, for which we toil so hardly and so anxiously, can give no confidence, can bestow no comfort; the trembling spirit may inquire, what can? If neither the rich, nor the proud, nor the noble, nor the mighty, can in virtue of these qualifications stand upright in the presence of the eternal judge, you may seek perhaps to know, what are those endowments which can give boldness in this day of judgment? Who are they, it may be asked, who will abide in hope, when so many of the most exalted of the earth, are put to shame and confusion? What course of living, what discipline of the soul, must be practised in our mortal sojourning, that we may stand unhurt in this final consummation of all things? The words of our text will, if taken in connection with the passage to which they belong, give a full and satisfactory answer to the enquiry. "Herein" says St. John, "is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment." You see how he directs the thoughts and energies of Christians towards this prize of their high calling, a life of happiness to come. He tells them, that their love to God and his eternal and ever blessed

Son, is imperfect, is not real nor effectual, unless it bind them so closely to his service, unless it make them so entirely his own, that they are, by his grace, enabled so to prepare themselves, that whenever he comes, whether at midnight, at cock-crowing, or in the morning, they may meet him with joy, having their lamps trimmed and their lights burning. It is then the penitent and zealous Christian, who will have boldness before his Maker's throne. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ which can alone fill the soul with humble and pious confidence, when all the glories and gifts of earth decay and disappear. The holy band of martyrs who died despised and scorned, will reign triumphant there, in the presence of that Saviour for whose name their blood was shed. And every Christian soldier, however humble the rank he holds, however neglected and unvalued here, will in that marriage supper of the great Captain of his salvation, be crowned with a wreath of glory that will never fade.

My brethren, do ye ever turn your thoughts from the vanities which are passing around you, to the contemplation of this future scene of the judgment of the Almighty? Do you consider it as a day, which will be the beginning of an eternal existence either of happiness or sorrow? Do you regard it, not only as deciding the doom of your fellow-creatures, but as fixing your own?

And do you desire to be endowed at this awful period, with that boldness of which the apostle speaks? The same apostle will tell you, that you must dwell in love, and then you will dwell in God, and God in you. Would you still farther learn what is meant by this love, which is the fruit of the indwelling of divine grace, you will read, that "whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." To confess Christ, is not merely to acknowledge him as the Lord of all; to give a bare acquiescence in his eternity and power. True indeed it is, that a belief in his holiness, his unity with the Father, his mediation and atonement, must form of necessity the basis of our faith in him. For except we are persuaded of these glories and these mercies of the Redeemer; if they are not ever present with us, as a burning and a shining light; our piety must lose its fervour, and our religion its comfort. It is a truth, of which every Christian penitent must be well persuaded, that the consolations which cheer him in his hours of sorrow; the hopes which brighten upon the path of his weary wayfaring; all spring from his trust in the promised aid of him who hath declared, that he will be with his servants always to the end of the world. But then, the confidence which can thus tranquillize the spirit in its agony; which can thus encourage

the tired and restless traveller to journey on, in the sure hope of finding a home at last, must be something more than a mere sentiment of the mind; a barren assent to truths, which the devils even are unable to deny. To confess Christ indeed, is to become his chosen servants; to be clothed with his spirit; to walk, as far as our sinful natures will permit, in his footsteps. It is to do all for him and through him. And herein, my brethren, consists the difference between the mere moralist and the Christian. I know well, that it is the favourite theory of many, that every deed of kindness and honesty is an acceptable offering to God, and that he will hereafter reward us for the intrinsic merits of these attempts at obedience. But we must ever bear in mind, that the action itself is not holy; that it is the motive alone by which it can be sanctified. If it be done for Christ's sake, God will accept and bless it; if it be performed without any reference to him, if we seek not the assistance of his Spirit to enable us to obey his will, we may not hope that an offering so impure will find any favour where he reigns in majesty and power.

The whole tenour of the gospel indeed, is to purify and sanctify the heart. For this end, it admits no external actions as righteous, except they spring from a penitent and contrite spirit. To this inward purity all its precepts and practice

tend. It commands us to keep ourselves unspotted from the world; it teaches us that we are not to expect a recompense in this life; that we may, on the contrary, look for our share in those sorrows and calamities which are strewed so thickly around our steps: and experience has proved, that its most devoted believers have often tasted largely of the cup of affliction. But the happiness which it forbids us to expect on earth, it promises us abundantly in heaven. This is but the scene of the Christian's warfare; it is his field of battle: and though we view him toiling all the day with fortitude and zeal untired, and winning his perilous way through the thickest of the fight; yet his hour of triumph is not seen on earth; for though the victory be won, the night of death falls around him ere the wreath of conquest has been twined about his brows. But when the sun of eternity beams upon his head; when the corruptible has put on incorruption, and the mortal has been clothed with immortality: then comes the moment of his rejoicing, the welcome home of God's chosen warrior. When the throne is set in heaven, and the children of this world tremble before its brightness, he alone will have boldness in that hour of almost universal fear, and hail his Saviour's second coming with songs of gratitude and joy.

Do ye desire, my brethren, this confidence?

Do ye wish thus to have boldness in the day of judgment? You can find it only in the faith of a crucified Redeemer, in confessing on earth the name of him, who will be your Judge and King in heaven. And if this be the privilege of his chosen servants; if they alone may stand in his sight even when he is angry, who would not wish to be one of his household, to become a member of his flock? Serve him then in spirit and in truth; come to him in lowliness and singleness of heart; forsake the world and all its disappointments and vanities, which can give you no comfort in the time of need; and put all your trust in his might and mercy, who in the day of his vengeance will compass you about with songs of deliverance.

SERMON XIV.

JOHN XV, 26.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

THE last conversations of our Saviour with his disciples, as recorded in the gospel of St. John, are of the most interesting and affecting nature. His repeated declarations of his own approaching death, and of the tribulation and sorrow to which they would be exposed from the malice and cruelty which sought to banish his name and gospel from the world, had made a deep and mournful impression upon their hearts. They had been buoyed up till then with the long indulged hope of their nation, that their Messiah was to reign in glory at Jerusalem, and bring back to the towers of Sion the peace and prosperity to which they had so long been strangers. Through the whole course of our Saviour's earthly ministry, this hope had clung to their hearts:

if it wavered at times when their Master submitted to the contempt and insults of their countrymen, yet every fresh miracle served but to kindle it anew, and every repeated display of power seemed a prelude to the establishment of an universal dominion. But when the time of his departure was at hand, when he told them that his sojourn with them was but for a little while; that the hour would soon arrive when they would seek him but would not find him; and that where he was going they could not follow; the spirit of illusory expectation, which had animated them so long, died away, and sorrow and despondency succeeded in its stead. To console them in this hour of distress, he made that gracious promise to which the text alludes. He told them that, although he was about to leave them, yet he would pray the Father, who would give them another Comforter, to abide with them for ever. As an additional source of consolation, he added, that his removal from amongst them, though it might be painful for a time, would yet in the end prove a great and lasting benefit. "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

It is probable, indeed, that this promise was but ill understood by the afflicted disciples, that it did not then convey much comfort to their

sorrows, that it was in a very short time entirely forgotten. Not that they would, like too many amongst ourselves, reject with contempt the offers of assistance thus mercifully held out to them, but their inexperience of the advantages of such aid, caused them to think but little of its efficacy. It was on the day of Pentecost, the anniversary of which we are now assembled to celebrate, that the mighty effects of the presence of this heavenly guardian were made manifest before them. On this day, we read, "they were all with one accord in one place," meditating probably upon their own dangerous and helpless condition, though doubtless cheered by the recent wonders of the resurrection and ascension of their beloved Master. In the midst of their anxious, and, perhaps, melancholy conferring, "there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." How graciously was the promise of the Saviour fulfilled! He foretold a Comforter, and the first operation of this blessed co-operator in man's salvation, was to enable the disciples to surmount without difficulty, and even without trouble, one of the most formidable

obstacles that opposed their ministry. Their Lord had commanded them to preach the gospel to every creature; and they must have often felt the apparent impracticability of fulfilling this injunction, from their incapacity to hold any communication with those nations which were strangers to their own language. But the tongues of fire, fit emblems of the effect to be produced by their descending, dispelled all doubt, and gifted the first preachers of the truth with a passport into every land.

When this subject arrests our attention, and it cannot fail to do so whenever it is brought before us, every serious and pious heart will mourn over the melancholy perversion which has been made in our days of a dispensation so holy. Some there are, I am willing to hope, deceived rather than deceivers, who imagine that the mantle of the apostles has descended upon them, and that the senseless jargon which they pour forth at their frantic assemblies, is an emanation from the throne of grace, a miraculous visitation, though for what purpose designed it would indeed be difficult to tell. But whilst we pity the deluded enthusiasts who perform at these strange exhibitions, we cannot but deeply deplore the injury done to the cause of the gospel by such absurdities. They furnish the scoffer with an extra jest; they provide the sceptic with fresh weapons;

they whet the arrows of his calumny to a sharper point. I will trespass, however, no longer upon your time, by making further allusions to these unhappy errors. They do not prevail, I believe, to any great extent, and let us trust that, as they will be found to yield no fruit, so, like the barren fig-tree, they may wither and die.

This day calls rather for other topics of exhortation, other sources of religious improvement. You have seen that our Saviour, when he announced the future descent of the Holy Ghost, spoke of him as the Comforter. You have also learned that the first manifestation of his presence was to give strength and support to the apostles, by removing one of the greatest difficulties they had to encounter. This, however, was but the beginning of his gracious assistance. The rushing wind, indeed, might not be heard, the tongues of fire might not be seen again, but the presence of the divine visitant, of whose first coming they were the heralds, was never withdrawn. In all their wanderings, in all their woes, he was present with them as a burning and a shining light. He hovered around the head of the earliest martyr of the faith; he consoled and cheered his spirit, when earth had nothing but wounds, and misery, and insult to offer him. By one bright vision of immortal splendour, he dashed aside the bitterness of death, and gave the expiring

saint a glimpse of heaven, ere he had shaken off his tabernacle of earth. You must have read, I trust you have often read, the impressive and interesting account which St. Luke has given of this last hour of the martyr's triumph. To-day, when we are considering the Holy Spirit as the Comforter of the Christian's soul, it is doubly precious to hear how he once consoled the agonies of a Christian's suffering. Stephen had made a triumphant defence—had silenced the cavillings of his adversaries—had stung them to the heart by his reasoning, although he could not turn that heart from its obduracy. In the expressive language of the apostle, "they gnashed upon him with their teeth." And now, my brethren, attend, I beseech you, to the conduct of the seemingly friendless captive. Did he supplicate for mercy from his murderers? Did he tremble even at their ferocity, or shrink from the fate which awaited him? We read not that a tear was shed, that a limb shook, or an eye quivered. And who was his comforter in this hour of his deepest agony? Ask ye who, my brethren? Listen to the sacred historian's words of fire, and if ye can have a doubt, it will be fully removed. "But he, being *full of the Holy Ghost*, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God."

Gloriously and graciously in this case were

the Saviour's prophetic words fulfilled: "I will not leave you comfortless." Mercifully indeed, mercifully almost beyond hope, did the promised Comforter visit his servant in his affliction. And if we follow the survivors of this first champion of our holy faith, through the varied scenes of their eventful pilgrimage, we shall find in all the same cheerful and unflinching zeal, the same constant and unfading support, which blessed his latest hours, and curtained his bed of death with the glorious vision of God's eternal rest. That Holy Spirit was ever present with them, to give them courage in the hour of danger, and a cheerful mind even in the midst of persecution. Let us follow St. Peter to his prison chamber, and advert briefly to the circumstances which attended his incarceration. He had beheld one of those beloved companions, who had toiled with him through so many dangers; who had been admitted with him into the utmost confidence of their affectionate Master; who had been, equally with himself, a witness of the scenes of the Redeemer's greatest earthly glory, and perhaps of his greatest earthly suffering; he had seen this friend and more than brother, cut off by the ruthless order of a ferocious tyrant, and compelled by his unprincipled mandate to drink that cup of which he had before declared his willingness to partake.*

* Matthew xx, 22.

Herod, we are told, finding that the death of James gratified the relentless temper of the Jews, "proceeded further to take Peter also. And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people." Of the motive of this seizure there can be no doubt. The crown of martyrdom, which had so lately been bound around the brows of James would, but for God's interposition, have soon encircled those of Peter also.

The feast of the Passover drew to a close; the day was at hand on which the imprisoned and seemingly forsaken disciple, was destined to be brought forth as a public spectacle, to feast the malice and vengeance of his countrymen by a painful death. Here must surely be a lesson to the Christian sufferer. The days of persecution we trust are ended; but it must cheer and enliven the soul of the faithful believer now, to see how the spirit of holiness can give strength and support even in the extremity of peril and distress. For our consolation and instruction, the gloom of that fearful dungeon is dispelled by a beam of God's own light, and we are enabled to penetrate the secrets of that dismal prison house. Let us enter for one moment, and contemplate in imagination the scene which is passing there. You

might expect, at least, that the intended victim would spend the hours of an existence, so soon, in all human probability, to be brought to a close, in wakeful meditation. You might expect especially that he, who had not long since, through the very fear of consequences, been guilty of an act of base ingratitude, and denied his kind and gracious Master, would now, when death in a frightful guise appeared before him, shrink from the tyrant's grasp, and struggle hard for the life he once seemed so much to love. Enter the cell of his confinement. How fares the sufferer? Hear you any groans of anguish, any denial of the offence with which he was charged, any repining at the hard fate to which he deemed himself destined? He sleeps, my brethren. The chains—the soldiers who watch by his side—have no power to disturb the tranquillity of his slumbers. He sleeps, though the scaffold is preparing, and malice is awake in anticipation of the coming festival. And what wondrous power was that which, in an hour like this, could thus tranquilize the spirits of the captive, and shed upon him the blessings of a calm and unruffled rest, when pain, and ignominy, and death, hovered around him? It was the Comforter whom the Saviour promised, that Spirit of truth and holiness, which thus soothed him in his day of anguish, and sent

an angel too, to save him from the fate by which he was threatened.

My brethren, do you desire to be so consoled and so supported, when the day of your sorrow and tribulation comes? You may not indeed, I trust you will not, like St. Peter, be ever found with the chains of persecution bound around you, and the rack and the stake prepared for your miseries. But you may, most probably you will, be exposed to many trials and adversities, to the loss of worldly comforts, the affliction of worldly woes. What living soul amongst you has never known the hour, when his spirit has been bowed down by a grief, which no mortal comforter could alleviate or dispel. Some there are, I doubt not, before me now, who bear with them a weight of sorrows, which no fleshly arm can lighten or remove. The world, which may perchance in the day of thoughtless prosperity, share our joys and tempt us on to fresh delights, will fail us assuredly, when the tempest of affliction howls around our dwelling. The hand of charity and compassion, may, indeed, and often does, pour a balm upon those sorrows, which the stern hand of poverty scatters around her path. But there are some woes so deep, so poignant, that no human sympathy can soothe them. There are sorrows which the world sees not, but which do, if un-

checked, bend the strongest spirit, and break the stoutest heart.

We talk much at times of worldly comforts ; of the comforts of home, of the comforts of children and kindred, of the comforts of society and friendship, and far, very far be from me the wish to depreciate these blessings which a kind and bounteous Creator has shied upon our pilgrimage. I have experienced and enjoyed them all, and I bless God for the mercy which has bestowed them on me. But who does not feel, that these are uncertain advantages at best ; that they may, that they often do disappoint us, and become a source of much anguish and care. The blast of death may desolate our dwellings, or that far heavier woe, dishonour, may blight the hopes we had so fondly fostered. For friendship, alas ! who has not often proved its insincerity ? Who has not often found, that the world can smile and yet be a deadly foe ? If then, I could guide you to no better source of consolation than these unstable benefits afford ; if, when a brother in his affliction, asked me to soothe his sorrows, I could give him no better comfort, than to bid him go home to his own family, or consult the advice and ask the sympathy of his friends ; few would be the troubles relieved by such counsel—few the spirits, to whom such exhortation would convey a ray of gladness or a gleam of hope. But

God has not left his ministers so powerless in their admonitions. Blessed be his name we are not so forsaken as to have no other source of support in distress, than that which the world can give. That Holy Spirit, who did, as on this day, first send down his light upon the apostles, left not the world when their ministry and labours were ended. He is still present with us, to guide and cheer our steps, wherever our feet may tread. Without his aid, indeed, we can do nothing which God will accept; his sacred influence must purify our hearts, ere they can conceive a good thought or counsel a pious action.

On this occasion, however, I have considered this blessed messenger of our Saviour's mercy, in that point of view, in which he himself has been graciously pleased to place him. I have dwelt upon his holy assistance, as a comforter when no other friend could comfort; a giver of gladness, when no other voice could cheer. I have endeavoured to induce you to seek his aid, by bringing before you two striking instances, in which that aid had been found so powerful in times of unusual peril and distress. I have shewn you, (few words indeed were necessary for that,) that the world could never bestow such consolation, nor minister such support. The choice, my brethren, must remain with yourselves; I can but exhort you to embrace that which will alone

save you in the day of trial. If this be the hope to which you cling; implore the help and direction of that Spirit of God, who alone can spread a table in the wilderness, and provide water in the desert. But remember the prophet's warning, "Seek the Lord whilst he may be found, call upon him whilst he is near." Defer not until a future period to solicit that divine grace, which be assured will never be granted to the careless or dilatory petitioner. He can find indeed no resting place in the heart which is not warmed into piety by the great truths of our holy faith. For deem not, that this Spirit of Holiness will bring us wealth, or pleasure, or renown. His source of comfort springs not from a renewed participation in mortal enjoyments, but from the contemplation of the pure delights which the Saviour has prepared in heaven for those that love him. When he shed his consolations around the earliest martyr's head, he promised him no earthly recompense, he held out no hope of deliverance from the fate before him: but he did far more than this; he shewed him "the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." If then your hearts be softened; if the consideration of your Saviour's great and wondrous mercies, which have so lately been made the theme of your prayer and praise, has disposed your souls to bless and adore his name; if you

have followed him with the eye of faith, from the field of Gethsemane to the hill of Calvary and the sepulchre in the garden: if you have seen him rise from the tomb, and after a brief sojourn amongst his now comforted disciples, ascend up to the mansions of eternal glory, which he had for our sakes forsaken; do not, I beseech you, leave this beginning of godliness unfinished. On this day, my brethren, so fitted, so congenial to such a service, bow down before the great and eternal God, and beseech him, that on your heads also as well as on those of the apostles, his Holy Spirit may descend, to bless your ways in righteousness, and guide your feet into the paths of peace.

SERMON XV.

1 CORINTHIANS VI, 19, 20.

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's.

THE season just passed* has naturally led us to frequent reflection upon those mercies of redemption, which it was designed especially to bring forward to our notice. We have followed the Saviour with the footsteps of faith, through the last scenes of his earthly sufferings; we have seen him bound and derided, scourged and crucified. We beheld him rising on the third day from the dead, and triumphing alike over the malice of his accusers, and the power of the grave. We have considered too the spiritual gifts which this astonishing work of Almighty

* Easter.

love has bestowed upon us. We have seen that Jesus bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that he died to pay the penalty which God's justice demanded for the transgressions of a guilty world. We have contemplated likewise, the unspeakable blessings that followed his rising again. We have been led by the voice of revelation, to consider that glorious event, not merely as a display of Almighty power, or even as a bare figure, by which we were assured of the certainty of a future resurrection; but as the signal of a mighty victory obtained over the devil, and his attendant ministers, sin and death, by which our faith is confirmed and supported, and our confidence in the propitiation made for our transgressions, is established. We have seen the full force of the apostle's declaration, that "if Christ be not raised, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins;" and we have, I trust, in consequence, blessed God for having given us the knowledge that Jesus is indeed risen and "become the first fruits of them that slept."

So far, my brethren, I trust we have done well. But another important question yet remains to be considered. What has been the result of our meditations to ourselves? Have they tended to spiritualize our hearts, to make us think more frequently and more deeply upon heavenly things; to draw our affections away from this

world and all its unsubstantial advantages, and fix them upon that better country whose joys are pure and eternal? Has the knowledge of the truth made us more holy? Has it inspired us with the anxious desire to approve ourselves before God in all things? Has it filled us with the conviction, that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and given us at the same time, a reverential fear, lest we should, by our own evil deeds, pollute the dwelling of this sacred guest. It may be perhaps, that a few words of exhortation on this important point, will bring before you the inseparable connection between faith and obedience, will lead you to pray, that you may not be of the number of those who hear but do not.

In the fulfilment of this purpose, the words of the apostle, as quoted in my text, seemed peculiarly calculated to enforce the admonitions which I would this day press upon your hearts: because he makes his exhortations to holiness, rest upon the knowledge of those very mercies, which, at this solemn period, have been so prominently brought before us. The whole of the sixth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, contains powerful incentives to purity, and fearful judgments against sin. St. Paul warns the Corinthians from a participation in those iniquities, with which the men of their own city were so

deeply defiled, and in which they themselves, in their unconverted state, had probably partaken. And he exhorts them to preserve their chastity of spirit, because they are not their own, but are bought with a price.

Let us consider, with God's blessing, more particularly, the nature of that holiness which the apostle enjoins, and the motives by which he enforces it upon us.

The whole scope and design of the gospel, is to make known to man the way of salvation, to point out the path of mercy, and to show by what means he may be reconciled to God. A change must necessarily be wrought in his own soul, by the introduction of views so spiritual and so holy. The heart must, indeed, be prepared by the Holy Spirit, for the reception of these sacred truths, or they would be poured upon it in vain. In its natural state, it would be unable to understand and appreciate those precious gifts of God, which the merits of our Redeemer have purchased for all his servants. The necessary consequences of the indwelling of this gracious Comforter, are faith followed by purity of life. Faith comes first, faith in the atonement of Christ filling our souls with gratitude and love to him : and accompanied by the humble but ardent desire to obey his will in all things. This necessary connection between faith and obedience cannot be broken,

and he who should attempt to separate them, would be guilty of the fearful crime, of preaching another gospel than that which Christ and his apostles taught. We must not only, therefore, devote ourselves to the frequent contemplation of the mercies of our redemption in Christ Jesus, but we must also seek to please him in all things, we must conform ourselves, with the assistance of his grace, to those precepts and principles which he has enjoined upon us.

When we bear this in mind, and look upon the world around us, what a frightful picture do we behold of its indifference to the calls of religion. How little anxiety do we see displayed amongst men, to do the will of the Saviour who redeemed them; how negligent do they in general appear of the high and holy service to which they are called. We may be made the children of God, and yet we are contented too often to remain far from his family and the courts of his tabernacle. Children of God! Alas! the complexion of human society is too often stained with blemishes, which proclaim but too truly, that few are they who shall be saved. If we could separate from their brethren, the adulterer, the drunkard, the defrauder, the swearer, the liar, the vain, the proud, the careless, the lukewarm, and the unbeliever, I fear that the number who could pronounce themselves free from

the wilful commission of these, and similar offences, would be small indeed. If the cry were made, who is on the Lord's side, who? it might scarcely, perhaps be more abundantly answered, than it was when Jehu raised it within the gates of the harlot Jezebel. It is hard to conceive, how the thoughts of what must come hereafter should be so banished from the sinner's heart, as to render him insensible to the inevitable consequences of his present depravity. It is hard to imagine, that the knell of death should be so continually sounding in his ears, and yet inflict no terrors upon his soul. It is strange that he should so labour for the meat that perisheth, that he should heap up treasures in a world which must early pass away from before him, and from which he cannot carry one grain of comfort to support him through the long eternity of God's vengeance. Where is that reason of which he boasts so much? Where are his faculties of thought, of memory, of prudence, in which he is so prone to pride himself? Oh! fearful must be the power of sin, which can thus cloud every brighter endowment of our nature, and lead us submissive in its train, although we know that such submission can guide us only to misery. Alas! what a scene of bloodshed, of strife, of intemperance, of unhallowed and lawless indulgence, has this earth been made by its accursed agency?

See how it tempts men to defraud, to deceive, to hate each other. Look at the gambler's board, where the demon of avarice rules and reigns supreme. It matters not whether the stake you play for, be pounds or pence; whether the rich man casts down his superfluous gold, or the poor man ventures the earnings of his labour. There is the same feverish anxiety, the same unholy excitement, in both cases. Men are striving for that which endureth not, and striving for it too not in an honest and upright course, but in fear and passion and malevolence. Here sin riots, here spreads her snares and entraps her victims. Look again where that band of men are assembled together to drink until reason is lost, and the brain is maddened. Sin is busy there too, leading them on to destruction, and tempting them to barter their soul's safety for the gratification of a moment. In truth, if we look around us, we shall find ourselves beset with temptations and allurements; we shall see our path strewed with stumbling-blocks; and dangers lurking in almost every indulgence and gratification.

Now the holiness which the gospel requires, commands us to keep ourselves unspotted from all these defilements, to present our bodies, "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." It enjoins us to be perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect; and whatever we do, to

“do all to the glory of God.” It is a fearful consideration to reflect upon these injunctions to holiness, and then to call to mind how very far our lives are from that standard which the gospel has set up. My brethren, for every idle word we must give an account at the day of judgment. And who is there amongst us, that can hold himself guiltless of this fearful charge? It is clear then, that the rule of purity which the Scripture proposes, is very different from that by which the world ordinarily measures the actions and conversation. We generally consider as sins, those deeds alone by which some injury is done to our fellow-creatures. We are too prone to be guided in our ideas of holiness, either by the laws of the country in which we live, or the opinion of the society in which we dwell: that is, we esteem an act as sinful or not, according as we are liable to be punished for it at the bar of public justice or public opinion. And herein we do most fatally deceive ourselves; for we shall find, on a very slight examination, that there are many actions which God has declared he will visit with his heaviest vengeance, to which no penalty is attached by human laws or human customs. We are much too easily satisfied about the nature of sin; we draw too great a distinction between crimes. We fall into this error, and a dangerous error it is. We seem to con-

sider that God looks upon guilt with the same eyes with which we ourselves behold it. Now in our estimation of things, there appears to be a mighty difference between the guilt of a man who murders his neighbour to gratify his vengeance, and that of him who is contented to satiate his enmity in a less violent manner. The culprit who steals an apple from a stall, is deemed a far less atrocious offender, than he who forcibly enters the dwelling of another, and rifles it of its wealth. So the man, who should through malice break down his neighbour's fence, would meet but with a trifling punishment when compared with that fearful doom, which would have been awarded him, had he, in the gratification of the same evil passion, spread the flames of desolation in his garners and his threshing-floors. It is this distinction of crimes, which leads us into such perilous mistakes. We appear as if we imagined ourselves to stand in the same relation to God as we do to each other. Now nothing can be more erroneous than this. Human laws take cognizance only of those offences by which life or property is threatened or injured; and according to the extent of the mischief done or intended, so is the punishment proportioned. Hence, since the man who pilfers to the value of a penny, does much less injury than he who purloins to a greater amount, his offence is less se-

verely visited. But the case becomes very different when man is considered with reference to his Maker. No actions which we can commit, highly as we may think of our own powers, can in the remotest degree disturb the glory or the eternal felicity of God. Man may pollute this lower world with misery and woe; his hands may grasp with fraud or violence a brother's wealth, may be red even with a brother's blood; his tongue may deal forth blasphemy to God and curses to man; yet not one breath from this hideous guilt shall ever rise to pollute the sanctuary in which the Godhead dwells. Angels rejoice indeed, we read, when a sinner has repented, and a wanderer turned him home; but angels mourn not over the stubbornness of the stubborn, or the guilt of the guilty. They welcome every penitent into life with a song of gladness; but they shed no tears, because the wicked descend to the dust unconverted and unforgiven. Hence, then, it is clear, that our actions may have a very different appearance before God and before men; that deeds, which are thought lightly of in the world, may assume the character of heinous crimes, when called to account before his tribunal.

And this we find, by searching the records of Holy Writ, to be precisely the case. If we peruse the catalogues of offences given in various

parts of the apostolical writings, we shall find transgressions, which in the eyes of men are of very different degrees of criminality, here classed together, and declared to be equally culpable. There is a very striking instance of this in the 5th chapter of St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians, in which, at the 19th verse, the apostle declares, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these : adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like : of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." You have often, I doubt not, heard this passage recited ; it forms part of the epistle for the fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, and must therefore be read in our churches once every year at least. But few, probably, have given it that serious consideration which it so eminently deserves ; few have beheld the instructive picture it affords of God's estimation of sins. It may well alarm the unthinking to find, as they do from this remarkable enumeration, that hatred, and variance, and strife, and envy, and drunkenness, are classed with adultery, uncleanness, and murder, and declared to be as offensive in the sight of God. This view of the nature of sin, is

strengthened and confirmed by a passage in the very chapter from which my text is taken : “ Be not deceived ; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

But if this character of sin, as it is recorded in the Bible, be essentially different from that which is given of it by the world, so are the motives by which the inspired writers exhort us to flee from its pollutions, no less widely removed from the arguments by which the mere moralist seeks to engage man on the side of integrity. Listen for a moment to the philosopher of earth, reasoning upon the advantages of virtue and the dangers of vice. He will tell you, perhaps, that if you do what is right, you will be esteemed and applauded by all good men ; that a steady and upright course is sure to be the safest in the end ; in a word, that honesty is the best policy. He will talk of the advantages of a spotless reputation and unsullied credit. He will call your attention to the names of men who, from their unimpeachable integrity, have stood high in the opinion of their brethren ; have passed down the stream of life with the esteem and approbation of their fellow-men ; whose memories are still honoured by the applause and admiration of posterity ;

and he will, from their example, bid you go and do likewise. And if he would warn you from vice, and its never-failing companion, crime, his arguments rest upon the same sandy foundation of earthly expediency and advantage. He will hold up to view, the ruined health, the blighted reputation, the wasted fortunes of the votaries of dissipation and profligacy. He will point to the drunkard's starving family; the adulterer's home of misery; to the diseased and withered frame, which tells with frightful plainness, the tale of its own debaucheries. He will carry you in imagination to the dungeon and the gibbet, and bid you take solemn warning to yourselves from that fearful lesson-book. But alas! powerful as these admonitions may seem, when applied to correct the progress of guilt in the human mind, they are found to be unavailing: and they are found to be so from this simple reason; that they are based only upon motives, which have their origin in human conveniences and consequences. There is nothing in them to spiritualize the heart, nothing to wean its thoughts from earth, nothing to make it sensible of its capabilities, and turn it to the contemplation of the high and holy destiny to which it may, through a Saviour's mercy, attain. These are fatal defects, and if they be not supplied, no power of reasoning, no

charm of persuasion, can ever win a soul to virtue, or turn a soul from sin.

And here is one cause, why the gospel is so powerful to bring men to holiness, and fill them with a deep detestation of vice. Here is the mighty reason which bows down the stubborn and rebellious heart, that could be moved neither by the earthly rewards of virtue, nor the earthly penalties of guilt. Here is the incentive, before whose holier influence pleasure spreads her snares, avarice displays her hoards, pride proffers her dignities, in vain. You have heard the philosopher's reasoning in defence of virtue, and in hostility to vice; listen now to the exhortations of the Christian preacher, and may God stamp them deeply on your hearts. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

You have then, my brethren, two reasons given to induce you to forsake the paths of sin and guilt. "Your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost," and, "Ye are bought with a price." These motives bring our souls immediately to God; there is nothing of earth about them; they are altogether independent of its favours or its frowns. They lead us to look from this world

to the next; to consider not the state which we now occupy, but that to which we are called. "We are the temples of the Holy Ghost." Can the Christian desire a higher or purer motive to holiness than this? So vast, so merciful, are the results of our Saviour's sacrifice, that though we can only know them fully and plainly when we rise to him in glory, yet are they shed upon us here, to guide, to support, to comfort us, in our weary wayfaring. The Holy Spirit is poured upon the heart of every true and sincere believer; descends like a dove upon him to speak peace and gladness to his spirit, and leads him into all ways of truth, of meekness, of purity. He makes, in the expressive language of Scripture, the heart his dwelling-place. How forcible then, is the apostle's exhortation, that we should keep undefiled the courts of his tabernacle. His argument is powerful, even to a carnal understanding. For when, in our mansions of earth, we expect a guest whom we desire to honour, with what care and diligence do we prepare for his reception; and how studious are we, during his abode with us, to gratify his inclinations, and minister to his pleasures. My brethren, it is with the same anxiety to reverence, the same earnest desire to render him pleased with his abode, that you must welcome the visit of the Saviour's Comforter, if you desire him to continue with you. He can-

not dwell in a polluted house. He will never tarry where sin has any resting-place. Bear this too in mind, that it is written in the word of God, that "if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his." How impressive then, is the apostle's reasoning. He reminds the Corinthians of the high and holy privilege with which they are endowed; that they have a soul within them, on which the spirit of the Most High will descend, if he be not turned away by sinfulness and indifference; and he appeals to them, whether they will not desire to keep so holy an inhabitant, and whether they will not therefore seek to flee from sin, and cherish purity and the love of God.

But lest this should scarcely move them, he urges them to holiness by a still stronger claim. He tells them, that they are not their own; that they are bought with a price. That price, my brethren, you know full well, was the price of the Saviour's blood. If then one right and holy feeling lingers in the heart; if one spark of love to God for his mercies gleams in the soul, this exhortation of the apostle must call the one into activity, or kindle the other into flame. We are not our own; we are Christ's. Is not this a consideration which should demand our deepest gratitude? Is it not a blessing which we should prize above all that is fleeting and full of

decay? It is the promise of eternal happiness, the gracious intimation, that we are redeemed from the grasp of Satan, snatched from the pit of destruction, and ransomed from the jaws of the grave. If then we would not have this gracious Saviour cast us off as unprofitable servants, if we would reign with him hereafter in glory, we must seek to please him now, and shew by our life and conversation, that we do indeed feel in our hearts the blessing of that salvation which he has purchased for us. Now the same apostle who has told us that we are not our own, but Christ's, has told us also the signs by which those may be known, who have truly entered the Redeemer's service. "They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

These, then, are the gospel incentives to purity. "Ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost; ye are bought with a price:" make them, therefore, brethren, the light by which you walk. Flee from sin, not because you may incur disgrace with men, but because you desire to tabernacle in your hearts the Spirit of holiness, which dwelleth not with guilt and shame. "Glorify God in your body and in your spirit," for "ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." And remember, that your opinion of sin must not be the world's opinion; that you must consider as crimes, which in God's sight will draw down his heaviest vengeance,

many actions and many affections which you will not find condemned as sinful in the world's catalogue of offences. The apostle says, indeed, "ye are bought with a price;" but remember that, although that price has been paid, yet the thing purchased may be found deficient and rejected as worthless. The salt may lose its savour, and be thrown upon the dunghill. May God preserve you, my brethren, for a happier destiny than this; may he inspire you with the precious hope of becoming the temples of the Holy Ghost, the ransomed children of the Redeemer. Be this the sacred motive which fills your souls, and you will find, in joy and comfort, that whilst "the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

SERMON XVI.

ACTS xvii, 11, 12.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

IN a discourse which I delivered from this pulpit a few Sundays since, in alluding to the melancholy condition of those unhappy men, who have thrown off all the restraints of religion, who follow no guide but their own reason, obey no rule but their own will, and disregard alike the terrors of future punishment and the joys of future reward; I mentioned an intention of addressing a few words of advice and caution to these deluded brethren at a future opportunity. There are few, I trust, here present, to whom such exhortations are necessary; but if there be amongst you one fellow-creature thus tottering on the

brink of perdition ; thus hurrying to an eternity in which he has no hope ; and my humble efforts can, by God's blessing, snatch him from the precipice on which he stands, and teach him a holier and better creed ; my labours will not have been unavailing, nor these hours of sacred meditation be passed in vain.

It is a saddening thought to reflect, that infidelity should still exist in our land ; that, like a noxious weed, it should raise its deadly growth upon our plains, and turn the very dews of heaven into pestilence and poison. But so it is, and there are men alas ! who cherish this mildew of our happiness, this upas-tree of moral life, beneath whose withering shade no germ of holiness can spring, no bud of virtue blossom into beauty. These miserable teachers of blasphemy, these destroyers of man's best comforts here, and of his hopes of happiness hereafter, find I fear, but too many disciples. I may be addressing some who have imbibed partially or more generally, these pernicious doctrines ; who have forsaken, perhaps, the better way, rather from ignorance and carelessness, than from reckless depravity ; and who will listen therefore with calmness and attention to the arguments I have to offer for their consideration.

The limits within which compositions of this kind are necessarily confined, preclude me from

entering into a full and particular examination of the objections which have been urged against divine revelation. These cavillings have been ably and unanswerably discussed, and it is with a view of inducing you to consult the more copious treatises, in which these dissertations may be found, and to examine and sift the matter thoroughly yourselves, that I bring this most important subject before you. I ask but for candid and dispassionate enquiry. Like the single-hearted Beræans, search the Scriptures daily whether these things are so, and you will, I doubt not, become like them, Christians in spirit and in truth.

The divine mission of our blessed Saviour, and the faith he promulgated on earth, are the chief stumbling-blocks in your path; for if the truth of these be once established, all doubts about the inspiration of the Old Testament must be immediately resigned. Allow me then to offer a few remarks upon the truth of that dispensation, whose validity you are so ready to call in question. I have 'tis true, nothing new to bring forward, nothing to advance but what has been advanced before. But you may not, most probably you have not, heard the defence; although you have devoted much time, and some reflection, to the vituperation which the adversaries of our faith so liberally heap upon it. Give me then

your attention for a few minutes, upon a subject of the most momentous and lasting importance.

You will allow that Christianity exists, that it prevails over a large portion, and that the most enlightened, of the habitable earth. You will admit too, that it has not always been so prevalent: that there was a time when the name of Christian was not known in the world. It follows from this, that it is not coexistent with Creation; but must at some time or other have been established. The precise period at which this event took place is fixed beyond the possibility of doubt, by the testimony, not only of Christian, but also of heathen writers. I request you to pay particular attention to this latter species of evidence, for it is the testimony of enemies, and as such cannot with any shew of propriety be charged with collusion or imposture. From the accounts then, which the Pagan historians of the age have transmitted to us, we deduce the following facts. "That Christianity originated with Jesus; that the founder was put to death as a malefactor at Jerusalem, by the authority of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate; that the religion nevertheless spread in that city and throughout Judea; and that it was propagated thence to distant countries; that the converts were numerous; that they suffered great hardships and injuries for their profession; and

that all this took place in the age of the world which has been generally assigned.* The establishment of our holy religion having been thus satisfactorily ascertained, it remains to consider, by what means such an extraordinary innovation on existing institutions could have been effected. Our histories assert that the truth of the new faith was impressed upon the minds of men, by the miracles performed by its first preachers. But as you question the accuracy of these documents, I will not appeal to their testimony, but will endeavour to shew, from the nature of the case, that no other than miraculous evidence could have brought about so stupendous a change.

I can conceive, then, but four ways in which Christianity could have been successfully implanted in the world.

1st. Like the religion of Mahomet, by force of arms.

2ndly. By the influence and arguments of its first ministers.

3rdly. By its accordance with human passions, and with the prevailing tastes and opinions of the day.

4thly. By supernatural testimony in its favour.

Let us now examine briefly each of these several assignable causes.

* Paley's Evidences, to which the reader will perceive I have been mainly indebted for the augmentative part of this sermon.

1st. Was it established by force of arms? You will not, I am sure, attempt for a moment to maintain so extravagant and absurd a position. The testimony of the Roman writers before alluded to is conclusive upon this point. They represent the Christians as endowed indeed with the most heroic fortitude and perseverance, as suffering the most cruel persecutions and injuries, rather than forsake their faith; but never as attempting to defend or extend it by the sword.

2ndly. Was it established by the influence or arguments of its first ministers? And first with respect to their influence. The founder of the religion was publicly put to death as a malefactor at Jerusalem; and so humble, so neglected were his followers, that they were the sport of every tyrant, the scorn of the proud ones of the earth. You cannot therefore attribute the success of their mission, to their influence or authority amongst their countrymen. Nor will you impute it to the force of their reasoning, or their powers of persuasion. Had Christianity, indeed, been nothing more than a system of morality, they might have demonstrated its superior purity to all existing institutions. But when they came before the heathen world, and told them of an atonement, a redemption, a justification, and a judgment; had their preaching been seconded by no higher testimony to its truth, than what their

own reason afforded, their exertions would have made no converts, and the hopes and promises of the Gospel, would have faded and sunk into oblivion before they could have exerted any influence upon human conduct. No subtlety of reasoning could have established the fact, that the Being who had been lately put to death upon mount Calvary with every mark of contumely and insult, was the incarnate Son of the living God; and that this death was voluntarily incurred to redeem us from the curse of sin, and restore us to the favour of an offended God. I am then warranted in concluding from these considerations, that neither the rhetoric, nor the influential character of the apostles, could have been at all effectual in promoting the growth of the religion they taught.

3rdly. Was this religion established by reason of its accordance with human passions, and with the prevailing tastes and opinions of the day? Accordance with human passions! Where, alas! is the man whose virtue can stand the test of the gospel rule of right? Where is the human being, whose purity of thought and heart does not shrink from so severe a pattern? How, think you, would the apostles be received by the luxurious inhabitants of ancient Corinth, when they proposed this rigid principle of chastity: "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath

already committed adultery with her in his heart?" Or how would they have sped before a people, jealous of insults, and quick in resenting them, with such a precept as this on their lips, "If any man will smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also?" Nor would Christianity be more in accordance with the habits and prejudices, than it was with the moral dispositions of the heathen world. So far indeed was this from being the case, that it was opposed to the existing institutions of every nation upon earth. It did not profess merely to alter and improve, but to subvert them altogether. It did not aim at the erection of a new altar, or the introduction of a new Deity; but it commanded every shrine to be desecrated, and every idol destroyed. It denied the truth of every article of pagan mythology, the existence of every object of its worship. It accepted no compromise, it admitted no comprehension. It must prevail, if it prevailed at all, by the overthrow of every statue and temple in the world. So far, then, from being welcomed with cordiality, it could have met with nothing but opposition and hostility.

4thly. Since then it is manifest, that Christianity neither owes its rise to force of arms, nor to the influence and arguments of its first ministers, nor to its accordance with human passions, and with the prevailing tastes and opinions of

the day, we can come, I think, but to one conclusion, namely, that it was established by the power of miraculous evidence. Now if this be really the fact; if it appear beyond a doubt, that the Founder, and the original preachers of the gospel, were enabled to work miracles in proof of the truth of their mission, you will not, I apprehend, any longer refuse your assent to its divine original. Now the books of the New Testament contain a narration of many stupendous wonders wrought by Jesus and his disciples. They tell us of the blind restored to sight, the sick to health, and the dead to life. You will reject, I am aware, these accounts as fabulous; but before you do so, you must remember, that we can prove, by a chain of the most satisfactory testimony, that these histories were published in times immediately succeeding those in which these mighty deeds are asserted to have taken place, and whilst there were many living who could have proved the imposture, had there really been one. You cannot for a moment imagine that the apostles could have been themselves deceived. The nature of the miracles precludes all possibility of such suspicion. Nor can you, with any greater probability, suppose that they intended to impose upon others. You can assign no possible motives which could have induced them to publish such a tissue of forgeries and false-

hoods to the world. Read the history of the times, and you will find that no cruelty which malice could devise or hatred inflict, was thought too severe for the converts to the new religion. It is true, that men of enthusiastic minds have often submitted cheerfully to death, in support of opinions which they believed to be true. But the apostles voluntarily incurred the most appalling barbarities in maintenance of the reality, not of *opinions*, but of *facts*. "This Jesus," they declared to the astonished Jews, "whom ye slew and hanged on a tree, God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly." This material circumstance will entirely exculpate them from the charge of fanaticism. You must, then, either allow that they exposed themselves to persecution and death, in defence of the truth of facts, upon the reality of which they were quite competent to judge; or you must admit the monstrous supposition, that they became villains in order to make men righteous, and went about lying in order to teach virtue.

But the fact of our Saviour's miracles was admitted by the early adversaries of Christianity, by Celsus, Porphyry, and others; although they ascribed them to magic. To such a solution as this you will not, I am sure, subscribe. If these miracles really were wrought, (and I have made out, I hope, a strong case in their favour,) you

must acknowledge that no hand but that of God could have worked such wonders.

Time will not allow me to enter more deeply into this subject: I am therefore compelled to omit many convincing arguments in favour of the truth of that revelation which you so rashly deny. My object has been, not to present to you a general view of the Christian evidences, which would have far exceeded the limits of a discourse like this; but, by selecting one particular point, to endeavour to impress upon your minds the conviction, that there is indeed something extraordinary in Christianity, and to induce you to search further into its history and purpose.

And now, before we part, suffer me to address to you a few words of serious warning. You deny the truth of Christianity; you disbelieve the divine mission of Jesus Christ; you acknowledge not his atonement; you trust not in the merits of his death. Are you happier men, are you better men, in your infidelity? Does no apprehension of the future sometimes glance across your hours of gladness? Does no fear that to-morrow your place on earth may be vacant, sometimes damp the pleasures of to-day? Perhaps you never think of an hereafter; perhaps the present is the only time on which your hopes and cares are centered. Is this wise? Is this prudent? You must be aware, that your own

unbelief in another state of being, can be no proof that there is not an existence beyond the grave. Is it not then the part of every sensible man, to examine this fearful question with an unprejudiced and anxious mind? Thousands, nay millions, of your fellow-creatures, many of them endowed too with the clearest heads and brightest intellects, have sought for the confirmation of this momentous truth in that book in which it can alone be found. Yes, from that book, which you affect to deride and despise, the wisest and the best of the sons of men have derived comfort in distress, support in affliction, and hope in death. You are fond, I know, of ridiculing what you term the cant of churchmen. You will listen, perhaps, with greater attention, when I tell you what was said of the Bible by one of the greatest philosophers that ever lived; and though you will not hearken to me, you may be induced to reverence the advice which was given by Locke to a young man who was desirous of becoming acquainted with the doctrines of the Christian religion. "Study the Holy Scriptures, especially the New Testament: therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter." You cannot, perhaps, comprehend it in all its parts. Is this extraordinary? What grounds have you for believing, that

if God be pleased to reveal his will to man, he will of necessity propose nothing as an object of faith; but what is perfectly comprehensible by human faculties? Is this the case in the natural world. The seed which the husbandman now scatters on the ground is but dry and simple grain. Can you explain the mysterious process by which the blade, the ear, and the corn, are brought to maturity? Can you tell me why different soils are fitted to different plants? Can you shew why, when flowers in general expand their petals to the morning sun, others shun the beams of his glorious light, and blossom in darkness and silence? Be assured you will find difficulties enough around you, to cause you to hesitate before you deny a matter, simply because you do not understand it.

A few words more, and I have done. What are the characters of those who are, like yourselves, without God in the world? You may alas! bring forward the names of some highly gifted men, who have stood forward as the champions of your dark and desperate creed. But what were they in those higher and better qualities which alone adorn and ennoble the human heart? They were madmen who laughed at virtue, as they laughed at religion; who shrunk at the commission of no sensuality which the laws allowed; who dared the vengeance of their

God, though they crouched before the commands of men. To employ the present hour, was their maxim and their motto, as it is yours. The same unthinking race of destruction which you are now pursuing, has been pursued before. Many a miserable victim has drunk the cup of pleasure to the dregs; has tasted all the joys and gratifications which this world can give; has shouted amidst his unhallowed revelries, "tush thou God carest not for it;" has derided his Saviour's name; has rejected his Saviour's mercies; and then has found at last, that when this short-lived delusion was over, when the sand of life was nearly out, and the charms which once allured him, had lost their power to please; that he had no tower of strength to flee to, no harbour of refuge in which his tossed and shattered bark might hope for a quiet anchorage.

You must all die. On this point there can be no infidelity. If then there be an hereafter, if the Christian's creed of a Saviour, and an atonement, be not altogether a fable, where will you turn for comfort on the bed of death? At that awful hour, when the soul trembles on the verge of eternity, when it has received the summons which it dreads to hear, though it dares not disobey, say, where will the infidel seek for consolation? Spread the board of luxury before him—place the wine cup in his trembling hand—bid

him quaff the healths of his earlier years—call his companions to his bed—let the song, the laugh, and the jest go round—will such mirth and such associations soothe his departing hours? Try again—read from the pages of some light and jocund volume the tales which once amused and pleased him—see, they have lost their attraction now. Come then, a last resource remains. Tell him that he has nought to fear from eternity—that he will sink into nothingness—that he is about to take a dark and final plunge, and then be as though he had never been. Strange comfort this! and yet it is the best *you* have to offer. And now comes the gospel's triumph. Suffer me to transport you from this scene of agony and apprehension, to the chamber of the Christian's last earthly rest; aye, to the dying couch of him whom you have been accustomed to ridicule as a bigot and a dupe. See, he has friends around him too, the companions of his early days, the children of his fondest love, come, not to cheer him, but to be cheered; not to teach, but to learn to die. A book is opened here; but of a kind how different from that with which yonder miserable wretch was mocked in his remorse and despair; for it gives hope and strength to the dying penitent. Listen to the words of life which flow from its sacred pages, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on

immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord." Do you deem this a vain and empty effusion? Think you that words, which have power to comfort now, and to shed a gleam of joy even upon the cheek of death, are but the offspring of human eloquence?

Search then the Scriptures, my brethren, candidly and attentively. Examine the evidence upon which our religion rests. If it possesses such influence over human happiness, if its doctrines can thus enable man to triumph over mortal sorrows, and to tread the dark and fearful paths of the grave without dismay, it cannot be, what you rashly term it, a system of cunning and falsehood. Do not mistake a few witty sarcasms, or metaphysical subtleties, or ignorant misrepresentations, or unwarrantable assertions, for unanswerable arguments against revelation.* Pray now to God, if you never prayed before, pray now I beseech you to him, that he will be pleased to enlighten your understandings, and direct and rule your hearts. And may he in his infinite and

* Bishop Watson's Apology for Christianity.

never-wearied mercy, so turn you from the error of your ways, so guide you from your gloomy and hopeless creed to his own bright and glorious truth, that ye may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XVII.*

GENESIS XXVIII, 16, 17.

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

THE occasion, my brethren, which has this day called us together, is one of the most solemn and delightful which can ever engage the attention of man. We are met to open the portals of a new house of God; to implore his blessing upon our labours past, and his grace to direct and sanctify those which we have yet to perform. Sensible of the vast importance of this holy work, I feel deeply my own incapacity of setting forth in fitting language, the sacredness of those duties, which the present solemnity has made

* This Sermon was preached at the consecration of St. Peter's church, Great Yarmouth, August 16th, 1833.

imperative upon us; or the extent and value of those blessings, which we trust God's mercy will shed upon these walls now consecrated to him. To every Christian heart, the service of this day must have carried comfort and gladness. Comfort, because he would naturally reflect upon the souls, who might here be rescued from sin and death, to a sense of God's judgments and God's mercies; from an ignorance of the way of salvation, to a knowledge of the merits of the Redeemer's sacrifice; from the fearful bondage of the world, to the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And of gladness, because the kingdom of Christ may by its means, and with the assistance of his own Spirit, be extended the more widely, and diffuse still more extensively its consolations and its warnings amongst our people. He will rejoice because another blow has been struck at the dominion of Satan, another link been forged of that chain, which shall bind him for a thousand years. He will rejoice too, because amidst the almost daily increase of buildings around him, one more has been raised to point its head to heaven.

It is ordinarily a custom in the world, to celebrate with mirth and merriment the rearing of a roof, intended merely as a shelter from the wind, or a refuge from the storm. It is natural, indeed, to hail with emotions of satisfaction, the

completion of a new abode for our brethren, to view with gladness every fresh dwelling designed for the residence of God's creatures. But, bright as our anticipations may be, in thus contemplating the spot, where a parent's love may be called into life, the ties of affection be cherished, and the claims of friendship be heard and answered, they must fade and decay, to the Christian enquirer at least, before those far brighter hopes, inspired by the consummation of a work, in which we trust, though raised by sinful and mortal hands, the God of heaven and earth will let his blessing rest. Fair and sumptuous indeed, are the palaces, which man in his vanity sometimes erects for his own brief sojourning below; and yet the humblest tabernacle ever raised in the Saviour's name, is far fairer, far more enduring, and beyond all comparison, more useful. And yet we stand here in no unsightly temple. The hand of the workman has been abundantly and skilfully employed, to adorn and decorate its walls. The funds of the wealthy and the charitable have been devoted to its use with a pious and discriminating liberality. It is true, indeed, that human efforts at magnificence and splendour, must seem but as foolishness in the sight of God, as a mockery of his majesty, if they are made in the hope of preparing an altar worthy of his presence, a sanctuary fit for the ark of his mercy to

rest in. It is not on its carved ceilings, on its fair and sculptured arches, on its towers and pinnacles, shapely though they be, that God will look with favour and approbation; but on the beauty of holiness which will, we hope, hereafter beam upon these pillars and roofs, and gild them with a radiance which no earthly pencil can bestow.

Still, although God takes no delight in the triumphs of human art, although the veriest hovel, if hallowed by the presence of religion, is, in his sight, fairer than the proudest halls where the unbeliever dwells; yet does he regard the motive which prompts the liberal hand to pour forth its treasures to ornament his temple. If he heeds not the device of the workman or the chisel of the sculptor, yet will he bless the piety which first required, and has still to the end supported their labours. When he commanded the children of Israel in the wilderness to raise a tabernacle for his worship, he required from them offerings of cost and beauty. Gold, and silver, and stones of price, formed part of its decorations. Not that the glitter of these adornings could in truth be pleasant for him to look upon, but that he desired to intimate to the people he had chosen for his own, that they were not to worship him in semblance only, but in deed; that they were not to present before him "wood, and hay, and stubble," things upon which

they placed no value, but were to consider all they possessed as held from his bounty, and be ever ready to contribute it for his service. The feelings of David upon this point, were strong and decisive, and the recurrence to them at this period, will serve forcibly to illustrate our view of the subject. When the King of Israel had been tempted to number his people, and God had punished him for his sin by a three days' pestilence on the land; we read that as the destroying angel spread his wings over Jerusalem, the Lord in mercy stayed the plague, and by the mouth of his prophet, commanded the sorrowing monarch to rear an altar on the spot which had thus been made a witness, that even in vengeance he still remembers mercy. It was in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, that David was thus required to raise the memorial of his Creator's compassion; and when he asked the owner of the place, to sell him his possession, in order that he might obey the injunction he had received, Araunah offered it as a gift, and besought him also to take of his goods whatever might be needful for the ensuing sacrifice. The reply of David is strongly indicative of his own piety, and comes with peculiar force upon us at this time, when we also are contemplating the erection of a new altar to God, raised in a great measure and adorned by the voluntary contribu-

tions of those, who are now present, we trust, to view the glorious completion of the work which their benevolence has fostered and encouraged. "Nay," exclaimed the pious monarch, "but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." We have cause then to believe, that God looks with favour even upon the perishing emblems of earthly splendour, when they are offered with an humble and contrite heart, to adorn the walls of his temple or the table of his altar. We rejoice therefore not only in the liberality which has raised this goodly fabric, but in the bounty also which has lent its pious aid, to provide it so munificently with some of those appendages, necessary for the due and decent performance of Christian worship; because we hail it as an earnest of your attachment to religion in general, and to our truly evangelical church as its best and purest form. In these days especially, when that church is assailed by secret subtilty and open violence; when she is made a butt against which slander may aim her arrows, and malice pour the shafts of her heaviest vengeance; those who are her friends, and God be praised she has some warm and devoted ones, will sing a new song of praise and thanksgiving, when they learn that her walls have this day received a wider

range, and the courts of her dwelling so fair an increase.

But there is yet one other point, in which this church claims, and will receive the approbation of every sincere Christian, of far more importance in a religious view, than those decorations and ornaments, on which we have just now bestowed the meed of our applause. It is perhaps too frequently seen in our temples, that the poor man or the stranger who enters to pay his vows, can find no resting-place for the decent performance of his devotions. I need scarcely expatiate to you, my brethren, on the serious inconveniences and disadvantages which must result, wherever such a want exists. In many instances, it will serve as a plausible excuse for never attending the duties of public worship. And although it may seem at first sight, that the man who can suffer so poor an evasion to keep his feet from the courts of Jehovah, being of a careless and worldly spirit, will be little likely to receive benefit from a participation in the devotions therein performed; yet there are few Christian believers, whose experience has not taught them, that many a hardened heart has been softened, many a reckless libertine been reclaimed, by the word of truth directed by divine grace to his soul, within those walls of God, which he had entered, it may be, with a jest on his lips and mockery in

his heart. And more than this; in the humbler walks of life, there is many a pious and contrite spirit, who amidst the sorrows and privations to which poverty is so peculiarly liable, is anxious to seek before the mercy seat of God, that consolation which he cannot find upon earth. When one, so subdued, so prepared for the reception of the good seed of the gospel, enters the house of prayer, and finds there is there no place for him; judge ye, my brethren, whether this disappointment does not add bitterness to his distress, and make him doubly sensible of the griefs he would fain forget. It must gladden every heart then that feels for the poor man's woes, that feels too, there is but one balm that can heal, but one solace that can soothe his sufferings, to see that within these walls there is a merciful provision made, by which his wounded spirit may obtain that rest and comfort, which will alone lighten the heavy burden, and turn the weary way into a path of pleasantness and peace. Look round, my Christian brethren, then, with joy and gladness, and your eyes will rest upon means provided, by which eleven hundred souls, thus destitute of this world's wealth and goods, may eat the bread of life and drink water from the wells of heaven. Here may the contrite sinner come and taste how gracious the Lord is; here may the weeping supplicant freely beg the crumbs which fall

from his Saviour's table, well knowing that his petitions will not be refused.

There is much then, it seems, in the form and fashion of the sacred edifice in which we are now assembled; and still more in the great and excellent accommodation afforded by the numerous free sittings it contains; to make the pious spirit rejoice in its erection, and pray for its prosperity. Let us not, however, be satisfied with this partial view of the blessings of which, through God's grace, it may become the channel. Let us not separate to-day, without taking a more extended survey of the benefits it may be the means of dispensing amongst us, and reflecting more deeply upon the sacred purpose for which its walls are raised. We are met here, I trust, not merely to satisfy the cravings of curiosity, or feast our eyes with the novelty of the scene; but to deduce also, from the solemnity of the occasion, some lessons of spiritual edification, the effects of which may remain with us long after the pomp and ceremony we have witnessed shall have faded from our remembrance. In the hope of being enabled, by God's blessing, to make a practical application of the holy office which we are now performing, I have selected a passage from the life of the patriarch Jacob, as harmonizing well with those thoughts and feelings which all should entertain on this occasion. The words of the

text were spoken immediately after he awoke from his well-known vision of the ladder which reached to heaven. The circumstances under which that vision appeared; the rest and comfort which it brought to the harassed and toil-worn traveller; the awful impressions which it left behind of the sacredness of the spot in which the presence of the Eternal had been manifested; and the name, too, given by Jacob to the altar which his gratitude had reared: all conspire to make the details of the narrative of deep interest at the present time.

Faint and weary, fleeing from the vengeance of an enraged brother, the solitary wanderer arrived at nightfall in a spot where there was no friend to receive, no home to shelter him. He was compelled to rest on the bare earth, with a stone for his pillow and the sky his covering. But God was near the seemingly forsaken sleeper. He had in his mercy decreed to manifest his glory for the comfort and support of the exhausted wayfarer, even around the hard and flinty couch on which he had sought repose. Jacob beheld in his slumbers a vision emblematical of that gracious protection which the Father of all never fails to give to every sincere and humble heart. He saw a ladder which reached from earth to heaven; he saw angels ascending and descending upon it; he saw the Lord standing

above it. He heard also a voice which renewed the promises made to his fathers, and gave him the assurance of a constant and unvarying Providence. He awoke in fear. The glorious scene he had beheld, whilst it had cheered and consoled, had also left upon his soul a deep sense of his own weak and low estate, and of the holiness of the place in which this wondrous revelation had been made. His first emotion seems to have been that of surprise, at having lain down to sleep on ground so holy. "Surely," he exclaimed, "the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." The vision indeed had left him, but its awful splendours were yet fresh upon his mind, and when he thought upon them "he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." He took the stone which had been his resting-place, "he set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel," which signifies in the Hebrew tongue, "the house of God."

In thus considering the narrative of Jacob's dream, we cannot fail, I think, to be struck with the forcible resemblance which some points in it bear to the circumstances which attend the consecration of a Christian church, and the blessings which such an edifice may, with God's grace, be the means of shedding upon the soul of every

repentant sinner, who shall seek a refuge beneath its roof. Weary pilgrims indeed are we all, in this waste howling wilderness of sin and sorrow. When left to ourselves, when subject to no guidance but that of our own passions and desires, under no control but such as our own reason can exert, we are as homeless, houseless wanderers, in a strange and distant land. We have no habitation here which we can call our own; we know not in the morning where we shall pillow our heads at night. And the conviction of this truth will assuredly, however blind we may now be to the reality, one day or other, be forced upon us with a fearful certainty. And when this evidence of our natural condition, this sense of our own utter helplessness and destitution is thus brought home to our consciences, Jacob's unsheltered bed and stony pillow, are no unfitting emblems of our own cheerless and desolate place of rest. No, not of rest, my brethren, (the simile holds not here) but of wakeful anxious meditation. The patriarch, by the Spirit's guidance, sought his shelter in a spot which God vouchsafed to hallow for his own, and to sanctify by one of the sublimest revelations ever made to man. And what was the result? Jacob was strengthened and comforted. The despondency which had clouded his spirit, was removed at once, by the comfortable assurance which his

vision gave him, of the everlasting truth and providence of God. He saw how watchful the great Creator is over the children of his care, how, from the heaven of heavens he looks down to defend and bless them, and sends the bright messengers of his will to hover unseen about their path, to keep their hearts from sinking and their feet from stumbling. He felt that he was never alone; that in the silence of the desert, or the throng of the multitude, by night or by day, he was protected by an eye that never slumbers, an arm that is never weary. He went on his way rejoicing, and consecrated the spot in which he had been so cheered and so encouraged, by building an altar there to God, who had thus in mercy ministered to his sorrows.

Let us trust, my brethren, for in our blessed Saviour's promise we have reason to trust, that this altar, which our hands have raised, may in like manner be sanctified by the dews of his blessing. The sabbath call which is soon to be heard from these towers, will be, through God, we hope, a summons to every passing pilgrim to enter and be refreshed. Here may the fainting and friendless traveller come and find a friend in his hour of need. The ladder which Jacob saw will still be planted here, and the eye of faith may still discern angels ascending and descending upon it, and God the Saviour standing above, to hear the

supplications of all who desire hereafter to ascend to his bright dwelling of eternal peace. It is indeed a pleasant prospect, to look forward through future years, and hope that here may burn a perpetual light, to lighten the Gentiles and be the glory of the Christian Israel; that these walls may prove a bethel to many a contrite and sorrowing soul, which seeks repose beneath their shelter; or "as a fiery oven" to melt down the proud and stubborn heart, that has for other purposes than those of devotion, presumed to come within their sacred precincts. A few years since, and the ground on which we stand, was a barren and sandy waste, without a stone to tell that God had marked it out for his own. It was as unnoticed, perhaps, and as little valued, as the spot on which Jacob slept. In one minute particular that spot bears a close resemblance to our own: it was near a populous city. The patriarch's piety changed the name of that city, and we know not how far this circumstance was influential upon the lives and characters of its inhabitants. We do know indeed, that in after ages its glory departed, when Jeroboam set up his calves of gold, and made it, what Hosea terms it in derision, Bethaven, a house of vanity. From this temple, may God in his mercy ever avert so foul a profanation. We trust rather that our bethel here may be, whatever its type has proved, a source

from which religious knowledge may be diffused on those who dwell around it. The voice which spoke of comfort and peace to the soul of Jacob, told him of a deliverer who was hereafter to appear, in whose coming all the families of the earth were to be blessed. If this dim and distant prophecy of a Saviour, could impart joy to the breast of the sleeper then, how much more will their hearts be gladdened, who hear now that the promised Redeemer is come, and has bought us from the dead with a price. Here the full mercies of that atonement for sin will be proclaimed, which in the times to which our text belongs, were but indistinctly perceived. Here the name of Jesus will be preached as the sinner's only hope and strength. Here will the spirit, almost broken by the consciousness of its own sins and frailties, be taught to cast the burden of its woes at the feet of one, who hath promised to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. And if, when we walk abroad in the world, our ears are assailed with the miserable sophistries of the libertine or the unbeliever; *here*, if the gospel be truly taught, will the wretched calumnies of the sceptic, and the no less fatal presumption of the mere earthly moralist, be set aside; and justification by faith, through the merits of a crucified Saviour, be preached as the only true and appointed path of salvation.

It must surely, then, be a source of gladness to every sincere servant of his Lord, to contemplate, though it be in prospect, this blessed appropriation of a building to his worship and the propagation of his gospel; to reflect that his praise and his mercies will now be told, where a few short months ago, men met for careless, it may have been, for sinful converse; and that treasures will be gathered for heaven, where, in times not long since past, no wealth was thought of but such as this world could give. For myself, my brethren, I would observe, (and you will I trust, forgive me on the present occasion, if I venture, ere we part, to speak one word on my own hopes and feelings,) that in the remarks which I have just offered, I have, I hope, made use of no expression, which bears upon it the slightest mark of undue assumption or of self-applause. And if I have dilated with gladness upon the fair prospect of usefulness, which the opening of this church holds forth; it has been with no wish to arrogate for it, an atom more than that fair portion of interest, to which it may in justice lay claim. God forbid that one word that I have said should seem intended to depreciate, in the slightest degree, the labours of other watchmen in the fold of Christ. It is, on the contrary, a source of much satisfaction to me, that I am called upon to act with brethren so zealous and

forward in the good cause. From their example and their advice, I hope to derive much benefit and assistance. I am sensible, I trust, of the awful responsibility which rests upon me, and may God give me his grace, by which alone I can be enabled to become a faithful steward of his mysteries. Pray for me then, my brethren, that of the talents entrusted to my keeping, I may make a righteous use, and of the flock committed to my care, not one sheep may wander, because their shepherd has slumbered and slept.

SERMON XVIII.

1 TIM. VI, PART OF 12TH VERSE.

Fight the good fight of faith.

THE world in which we live, peopled as it is with intellectual beings, presents an anomaly so strange and monstrous, that were it not for the insight which Scripture gives us into human nature, we should be utterly at a loss to account for its existence. We hear men boast of their powers of reason and grasp of understanding; of their enterprize and industry; of their zeal and research; and yet, strange as it may appear, they are too commonly, as to any really valuable purpose to which these varied endowments are made subservient, more besotted than the helpless idiot, from whom God has, in mercy, it may be, removed those gifts which they talk of so loudly, and misuse so fearfully. Man appears upon earth in a double capacity; as having two

separate classes of duties to perform, not necessarily incompatible with each other, but extremely liable to become so, if the one be suffered to usurp that care and anxiety which should be bestowed upon the other alone. Man, then, being in the world, and being necessarily involved in worldly connections and alliances, is bound to fulfil his part in the general plan with diligence and uprightness. And never was idea more mistaken than that, which imagined that a life of austere seclusion would be more acceptable to God, than one spent in the active and zealous discharge of the various duties which our several stations impose upon us. The solitude of the cloister is not the place in which we can serve God so fully and so devoutly, as in letting the light of our charity and piety so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

But though we maintain that our great Creator requires at our hands a diligent and faithful service in the fulfilment of those claims, which, as parents, or children, or friends, or subjects, may devolve upon us; yet we must not forget, as too many are apt to do, that these are to be discharged only in subservience to other and higher purposes. If we bear not constantly in mind, even in the busiest scenes of this world of tumult and noise, that we have all within us an imperish-

able part, which must survive the frail and corruptible tabernacle in which it is now enveloped, and live through all eternity, either in the land of happy spirits, or the dark dungeons of horror and misery, with the angels who rebelled in heaven, and are still employed in promoting sin on earth, we shall, without escape, mistake the shadow for the substance, and devote to matters of temporal interest, that time, and thought, and solicitude, which should be bestowed on objects of eternal concern alone. That our cares do too commonly receive this unhappy direction, a very slight consideration will serve to convince us. For how little anxiety is shown in general for the attainment of those blessings which are to be without limit and without alloy; whilst the unstable advantages, which a very few brief years will bring to a close, are coveted and toiled for with the most painful assiduity and unwearied diligence. And however we may admire the foresight and prudence which calculate upon future contingencies, and dexterously turn them to profit, or the skilful combination and ready presence of mind, by which difficulties are anticipated and removed, or unexpected dangers firmly met and successfully surmounted, the Christian observer will too often be called upon to mourn, when he finds no corresponding alacrity and zeal in the management of those affairs, which have for their

object the attainment not of temporal, but of eternal wealth.

Let us look around us at the present season.* A very considerable proportion of the inhabitants of this populous town,† are at this period of the year actually engaged in one way or another, in the prosecution of a fluctuating, perhaps, but still generally lucrative, branch of traffic. No observer, however inattentive, can fail to be struck with the unusual excitement and activity which now prevail. And if we visit the shore, when the vessels engaged in this employment are bearing home the results of their successful enterprise; we shall see a life, an energy, pervading every man who moves around us, which prove most clearly how entirely his thoughts and hopes are bound up in the scene before him. What anxiety is shewn, as every fresh vessel nears the land, to ascertain the amount of her cargo. What laborious industry is displayed in conveying it to the shore, and then transmitting it to the several places, where it may be prepared for the market. This general diligence and occupation communicate a portion of their spirit to those, who have no immediate and pecuniary concern in what is passing on; and he must be strangely indifferent, who does not for the time at least, take an interest in the proceedings of the day.

* That of the herring fishery.

† Yarmouth.

But here let us pause a moment, and ask ourselves, what it is that calls forth all this energy and thoughtfulness. What is the object for which the cold and wintry wind is borne, the ocean-perils dared? And the answer will be, for the meat that perisheth. So far it is true, there is no harm. It is not intended to be inferred, that such activity and application are misemployed. But let us inquire farther. Do the persons who are thus distinguished by their solicitude for worldly gain, shew equal zeal in their endeavours to lay up treasures in heaven? Are obstacles met with and conquered, dangers defied and surmounted, as bravely and as cheerfully in their struggle for an incorruptible, as they are in that for a corruptible crown? I fear me, my brethren, a negative answer will be given to these most solemn and important questions. I fear it will be found, that many, very many of those who are so ready and forward to strive for the gain of this world; are but careless labourers in God's vineyard, if indeed they toil there at all. If this be the case (and few I think will be disposed to doubt its truth) to what melancholy reflections does the comparison which we have made between men struggling for earthly possessions, and men seeking for God's eternal inheritance, give rise. And let not, I beseech you, the view which has thus been taken, weak and imperfect

though it be, be regarded in the light of an amusing sketch; but make it, my brethren, a source of admonition and profit to yourselves.

You cannot, if you reflect seriously, but desire to live hereafter in joy, to become partakers of those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. You must know too well the bitterness of mortal misery, to desire that anguish and sorrow which will never end. You may, perhaps, take some delight now in the society of the evil and the profligate, the sceptic and the unbeliever; but is it such as you would wish to enjoy through the long ages of eternity? For be assured, that however pleasantly the sound of the libertine's licentiousness, or the infidel's profaneness, may fall at intervals on the ear, their foul pollutions and hideous blasphemies will become loathsome and terrible, when howled in darkness and despair for ever and ever. But, my brethren, although, like the wicked prophet, we desire to die the death of the righteous; to shun this everlasting load of misery and shame; yet is our conduct too often such as to belie our wishes, and, if persisted in, certain to lead us into the very gulf from which in its horrors we would fain be preserved. We seem to imagine, that to win heaven is no difficult matter: that we can secure an inheritance there, with much less trouble and anxiety, than are requisite in providing the con-

veniences of a home on earth: that we can eat the spiritual meat and drink the spiritual drink of the gospel, as easily and as carelessly as we sit down to the provisions of an earthly banquet. This is a great, and, if not perceived in time, will prove a fatal mistake. For as surely as God's word is true, so surely will none inherit his promises of mercy, who do not labour hard to enter that strait and narrow way that leadeth unto life. "Let us labour," says St. Paul, "to enter into that rest." The Scripture, indeed, every where represents our Christian pilgrimage as a season of continual striving and incessant watchfulness. Well acquainted, as the apostles were, with the natural corruption and deceitfulness of the heart, they frequently warned their converts from that ease and security in their own condition, which all are so prone to entertain, but which is so perilous to the soul's salvation. "Let him that thinketh he standeth," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "take heed lest he fall." And he represents himself as struggling with his evil passions, endeavouring, with God's help, to withstand the temptations which were constantly assailing him, that he might not lose the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus. "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." And in the

words of the text, he enjoins Timothy, to "fight the good fight of faith."

No power of language, could give us a more significant description of that zeal and unwearied diligence, necessary to enable us to run our course with joy, than that which the apostle has here employed. Our version fails to express in its full force the illustration intended. St. Paul does not, as our translation, unavoidably perhaps, represents him to do, design any allusion to the perils of mortal conflict, and the scenes of blood and carnage consequent upon such unholy strife. He refers to those games of the Greeks, so celebrated in ancient times, in which whoever excelled, was held afterwards in the highest honour and esteem. And let us observe here, for the credit of those poor pagans, that the trials of skill to which they summoned the bold and persevering amongst their citizens, were defiled by none of those foul and disgraceful pollutions, which attend too often, I may say I fear invariably, our imitations of them. In the race and the wrestling of the Greeks, the gambler and the sharper were alike unknown. The candidates for the prize, toiled not for worldly lucre, but for the honour and renown of victory. Hence there was nothing in these contests of a degrading and debasing nature; and St. Paul, therefore, frequently takes advantage of them, to instigate his disci-

ples to pursue their Christian course with the same ardour and unflinching zeal, that animated those who laboured for the short-lived fame attending the name of conqueror. In the example before us, he compares the faith of the believer to one of these anxious struggles; and commands Timothy so to bear himself in the conflict; so by prayer and supplication in the spirit, to become strengthened in the inner man; that he may fight the good fight, and win a crown of conquest which will never fade. The Greeks too, were in the habit of training themselves for these exhibitions, by a strict and regular course of discipline and self-denial; and none were permitted to enter the lists who had neglected such preparation. No notorious criminal, not even a near relation of one, was allowed to contend; and any person convicted of unfair or sinister conduct, was punished by a heavy fine. This rigid system of precaution then, was excellently calculated to set forth that vigilance and constant solicitude, which must guide and controul the Christian champion in the hours of his earthly contest. The foes indeed with whom he has to contend, are of no common power and malignity. But unhappily, it too often occurs, that we do not discover enmity, where the direst hatred is exercised against us. We yield to the artifice of the tempter, instead of confronting him with the sword of the

Spirit, and bidding him get behind us. For every unlicensed wish which passes across our minds; every evil passion which demands to be gratified; is a snare thrown out to draw our souls astray, and must be resisted, if we would win the fight.

Judge ye then, my brethren, whether, in a struggle so perilous as this, the believer has not need to take good heed lest he fall. And yet, it must be ever borne in mind, that although he is commanded thus to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling; it is God who must work in him, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Let him beware then, how he places any confidence in his own strength: how he says in his heart, that it is his own arm which shall get him the victory. Of himself he can do nothing, it is the grace of God which can alone act to the purifying of his soul. "By the grace of God," says St. Paul, "I am what I am;" and it is only by the operations of this holy Comforter, that we shall be enabled to run so that we may obtain. But although we have no power of ourselves to do any thing that is good; yet we have abundantly the power and inclination to perpetrate evil: and this leads us to stifle the holy warnings which the Spirit gives us, and banish them from our consciences, when they stand in the way of our worldly interests and occupations.

When the same apostle, whose words we just now quoted, solemnly enjoined the Thessalonians not to quench the Spirit: he bade them cherish the humility and contrition of soul; the humble and holy hope; the firm and undoubting faith; which the gospel taught. He commanded them to "fight the good fight of faith." He knew well, for he had often experienced the struggle, how painful an opposition the evil spirit within us would raise against the sacred principle, which the Redeemer's mercy has provided as the only means of justification. To believe in Christ indeed, as he requires to be believed in, is no light, nor in the first instance, at least, an easy task. He has declared, by the mouths of his apostles, that "he was once offered to bear the sins of many;" that "he needeth not daily, as the high priest of the Jews, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself." Having thus announced the salvation of mankind; having graciously vouchsafed to reveal himself as the lamb who was slain for them before the foundation of the world; he has also intimated, through the mouth of his own chosen teacher, the temper of mind and disposition of heart, in which we must receive and embrace these unmerited mercies. "Having therefore, brethren," said the inspired preacher to his Hebrew con-

verts, "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering."

But against this faith Satan directs his utmost enmity. He leads men to doubt the efficacy of our Redeemer's sacrifice, to think little about it; to trust rather in their own good deeds, than in the imputed righteousness of the Saviour's obedience. And this is the hardest struggle we have to undergo. For when once our faith is firm and settled, its fruits will necessarily spring up and abound in a life of piety and devotion. Men too often imagine, that it is the easiest thing in the world to believe. Now the fact is the very reverse of this; for every believer has experienced, that nothing is more difficult. He has found it easier even to subdue his passions, to observe the moral law in all its branches, than sincerely and unhesitatingly to believe, with all his heart and all his soul, in the efficacy of that one great atonement for sin, made on the hill of Calvary. Like the afflicted parent in the gospel, who besought our Lord to drive the dumb spirit from

his son ; many a time has he exclaimed, whilst the conflict between his faith, and the doubts by which the tempter has sought to weaken and destroy it, has been going on ; “ Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief.” Hence then, we may determine, whether our faith be that true and lively faith, that living principle of gratitude and love, which overcometh the world and has for its end salvation ; or whether it be a mere speculative acknowledgment of a truth which we dare not deny, but which we receive with thankless and indifferent hearts. For we may rest assured, that, if our faith never has any conflicts to sustain ; if it lies dormant as it were beneath the surface, and receives no shock from the many foes by which it is assailed ; if it never feels itself called upon to stand in its own defence, and resist the insidious artifices of the foe ; such faith is but faith in name, and not that, through which we may be made wise unto salvation. Depend upon it, the believer’s pilgrimage is a toilsome and a stirring one ; one in which every faculty of his soul must be engaged, every hope of his heart interested. And you may be as certain, that, where the work of salvation never costs you a moment’s thought, never puts you to a moment’s pain, God is not working in you, nor are you, to use St. Paul’s emphatic language, “ labourers together with him.”

To what purpose then do these observations tend? To a double one, my brethren. They may, by God's help, rouse the lukewarm and careless from their danger. They may persuade the secure and high-minded to mistrust the strength of their own resources, and flee for help to that only city of refuge, which God has appointed for the sinner's shelter. And should there be one hearer before me, who doubts the efficacy of the Redeemer's atonement, who looks to him with no eye of faith and love; they may, perhaps, soften his stubborn heart, and bring him before the footstool of that Saviour, in whom he has hitherto refused to believe, with the contrite ejaculation of the apostle "my Lord and my God." And they may also serve to convey comfort to some weary pilgrim, whose heart is ready to faint, and spirit to fail, in the conflict of faith in which he is engaged; because they may convince him, that the very anxieties and fears which assail him, are precisely those of which the apostle spoke in the text, and against which he exhorted his disciples to "quit themselves like men."

"Fight then," my brethren, "the good fight of faith." Be not disheartened by any dangers that may assault, or fears that may afflict you. Transfer to your spiritual labours, the diligence and zeal, which you now employ only in those of a temporal nature. Satan indeed is watching

you with a malignant eye, in the hope that your feet will stumble, and your hearts be dismayed. But be of good courage; there is another eye which never slumbers, resting upon you, an arm which is never weary, upraised to help you. The Redeemer, in whose mercy you confide, the Eternal Son of the Eternal God, who, wondrous and unspeakable as the mystery is, has bought us with the price of his own blood, is reigning ever in heaven, to bestow a crown of righteousness upon those, who "have fought the good fight," have finished their course with joy, and kept the faith until the end.

SERMON XIX.

1 THESSALONIANS v, 21.

Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good.

THE desire of religious knowledge is a sentiment necessary to the soul's health of every member of a Christian community. Each individual amongst us is, or at least ought to be, equally interested with his neighbour in this hunger and thirst after righteousness. The Scriptures tell us plainly that we are justified by faith alone. How necessary, then, is it for us to know what is that faith, through which our imperfect service will be accepted by God. That, from want of a due and impartial consideration of this saving principle, men are led into strange and perilous errors, the testimony of our own experience sufficiently shews. The great and precious truths of salvation through the merits and atonement of the blood of Christ, are presumptuously denied by no

inconsiderable portion of our brethren. A future state of eternal punishment is also treated as a fable, and assailed by arguments, not drawn from scripture indeed, but from the fallible deductions of human reason. In the midst of these dangerous heresies, it becomes a matter of the deepest concern to all, to have a right knowledge of the articles of Christian belief, so as to be able, when called upon, to give a reason of the faith that is in them. Few persons, I think, will be inclined to dispute the justness of this conclusion; but few also, I fear, will be disposed to pursue the course which this admission so plainly prescribes to them. There prevails, unhappily, amongst us, such a lukewarmness and indifference on subjects connected with religion, that the number of those who search the Scriptures, and go out to collect that manna from heaven, which is to be found in their pages alone, is small, when compared with the vast aggregate who have all the same interest, but not the same zeal, in the enquiry. It is a common mistake, to suppose that the ministers of God are the only persons who have any concern in thus examining the records of eternal truth. Men are prone to imagine, that they have little to do with religion, except to attend upon its public services. They are quite willing to leave the rest to those who are appointed to be their spiritual guides. And whilst,

in other respects, the attention they pay to holy subjects, bears a most disproportionate ratio to that which they give to worldly affairs ; in one point of view, it must be confessed, they do seem disposed to look upon them as a matter of business. For they appear to regard the ministers of the gospel as a company of men who are embarked in the traffic of religion ; and they are in general well pleased to leave them in quiet possession of the whole concern. They imagine, one would say, that they have no right to interfere with what they deem the peculiar property of others ; and so strictly do they in general act up to this principle, that they never even devote the thought of a moment to those pursuits in which the Christian minister is supposed to be more especially engaged. To him they leave willingly the office of searching the revelations of the divine will ; of examining the foundation upon which the fabric of their faith is built ; and the claims of the church to which they belong, to be considered as a branch of the true church of Christ.

But no error, my brethren, can be more pernicious than this. God requires not of you a blind service ; he desires you to follow no leader, except you are convinced that he is a safe guide. He has left you an unerring counsellor, to whom you may always refer, with the certainty that he

will never lead you astray. He has given you his own holy word, and he has commanded you to search it as the record of his will. But bear this in mind ; you are to search it with a deep reverence for its contents, and an entire desire to believe implicitly all it reveals, although all may not be within the limits of your feeble powers of understanding. The great truths of the gospel were not made known to you, that they might be received with a cold assent, and adopted as articles of faith, upon no other grounds, than because they form a part of the established creed of the church to which you chance to belong. This easy indifference is, I fear, but too prevalent amongst ourselves ; and it has produced, in many instances, the mischiefs which might have been apprehended. Men of this careless character, being totally unable to give a reason either of the hope or faith that is in them, are liable, above all others, “to be blown about with every wind of doctrine ;” and being neither capable of defending their own religious belief, if indeed they have rightly determined what that belief is, nor of detecting any fallacy in the opinions of others ; are not unfrequently induced to forsake the better way, in which they had, as it were by accident, found themselves, because they knew not how solid was its foundation, and how true its course. And thus many are said to have been converted

from the church of England, who never really knew what the church of England was.

In a matter of such vast importance as that of religion, it is the bounden duty of every man, who attaches himself to any particular body of professing Christians, to ascertain the grounds upon which the peculiar tenets they hold are founded; and he who does not do so, can scarcely be called a member of the church to which he claims to be allied. And now let me, in a question, in these times especially of the greatest moment, appeal to your own hearts, whether those observations may not to a considerable extent be applied to yourselves. You are nominally members of the church of England, you attend upon her services, you partake it may be in her sacraments; do you know the grounds upon which she builds her doctrines and her rites? Could you, if you were called upon to do so, give a reason of the faith that is in you; Could you defend her institutions and her services from the attacks of her opponents, or the sneers of the unbeliever? Few I fear, are they, who can answer these questions in the affirmative. For most of us are willing to take the matter upon trust, and leave to those, in whom we consider it an affair of business, the defence and justification of the sacred temple of our national faith. Yet, my brethren, this is not to follow the precept of the apostle, who com-

manded his Corinthian converts, not their pastors and teachers only, but every soul amongst them, "to watch, to stand fast in the faith, to be strong." This is not to be the soldiers and champions of the church; this is not to uphold the fabric of her strength, and to adorn her walls with righteousness. And yet, in truth, she has no common claims upon your affection and your zeal. She rests upon a base of holiness; her walls are built with the hands of saints, and cemented with martyrs' blood. She is not, as our Catholic brethen pretend, a church of yesterday. She has existed in the hearts of the faithful, since the glories of those times, when the first preachers of the gospel spread its glad tidings abroad. It is a comfort, and a source of triumph over the unfounded calumnies of popish accusers; to know that in all ages, even in the darkest which their tyranny and superstition ever brought upon the earth, God has reserved to himself a faithful few, who, in spite of cruelty and obloquy, the stake of fire and the living grave, have held fast that which is good. It is glorious to read of the toils, and the dangers, and the sufferings too, of these chosen champions of his faith; to reflect that, even when Romish oppression sought its victims, through every tract of the vast domains subject to its stern misrule; when the harlot queen was drunken with the blood of the saints;

a remnant lived, who scorned her abominations, despised the pomps and pageantry of her unmeaning service, and defied her power, even when she reigned the widest. They lived, though persecution in its foulest form dogged their steps, and hunted them for death. But God was with them; and the bloodhounds of human vengeance, followed their feet in vain. They still survive, as a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths; as an eternal monument of God's providence and protecting care. Through this uninterrupted train of God's servants, does our church trace her origin to the age of the apostles; she maintains that all her doctrines and services are derived from their practice or command; and requires the dutiful affection of her children, only as she shall be found to have walked in the ways which they prescribed. She makes Scripture the ground work of every thing she enjoins. She seeks not to suit the Bible to her own preconceived theories and opinions; but endeavours, through God's grace, to form her tenets and deduce her obligations, from the plain and straightforward interpretation of Holy Writ.

On these grounds then, my brethren, and on these alone, does our church claim your obedience to her laws and rites. She asks you to become her adopted children, if you believe her to be a true branch of the church of Christ. She

desires you to search and examine the Scriptures, for she feels confident, that they will bear a full and righteous testimony to her truth and apostolical origin. And whilst she thus openly challenges your investigation and enquiry; she demands from you, if you are satisfied with the justice of her pretensions, a due and exact performance of the services and sacraments which she has in her ritual enjoined.

That these are much neglected or carelessly performed, we are compelled with sorrow to confess. How few, comparatively speaking, are the numbers of those, who are regular attendants at the table of the Lord. Of this solemn rite of commemorative gratitude, which our blessed Saviour himself instituted, in a manner and at a season so sacred and so impressive, and enjoined upon his servants by obligations so binding, there are many who never partake. And that other sacrament, which our church, following the injunctions of Scripture, has enjoined upon all within her pale, how negligently, alas! is it too often received. The hasty and necessarily imperfect service, designed solely for the use of infants who are in the extremity of danger, is substituted too frequently for that fuller and far more impressive office, by which it was intended to welcome the infant Christian into the household of the Redeemer. And this mistake has

arisen very much from the decline of that zeal and anxiety about religion, to which I have before alluded. For men, not considering the motives which influenced the compilers of our liturgy, and the declarations of Scripture and practice of the primitive church, by which they were guided in their labours; have, in many instances, either declined altogether to adopt the forms which they, upon the maturest deliberation, have thought fit to prescribe, or if they have complied with them in the letter, have been miserably deficient in the spirit, which they were calculated to foster and instil. The sacrament of baptism affords me an apt and most striking illustration of this much to be regretted evil; and I am the rather induced to dwell a few moments upon it, since the week upon which we have this day entered, is destined to witness the solemn and impressive ceremony, by which the young members of the Christian church renew their baptismal vow, and profess their willingness to become Christ's chosen soldiers.

A very large proportion of parents are contented with the rite of baptism, unaccompanied by the wise and provident precautions designed by our Reformers, to keep the infant's steps within those paths of godliness, into which the baptismal sacrament gave them an entrance. Such, on the other hand, as do act up to the letter

of the rubric, and bring their children to the font; are yet frequently, to appearance at least, strangely ignorant of the nature and design of the service in which they are taking a part. And those who undertake the solemn duty of sponsors to the new-born Christian, seem often totally unconscious of the sacred charge then devolving upon them. It is this carelessness and indifference on the part of godfathers and godmothers, which has induced many conscientious persons to consider this part of the rite as a mere matter of form, and consequently to dispense with it altogether. Thus has one evil produced another. For that the absence of godfathers and godmothers properly disposed to do their duty, is an evil, will appear evident on a little consideration. There are few indeed, I believe, who will not readily admit, that the care of three faithful and zealous friends, solemnly pledged in the presence of God, to watch over the opening reason of the baptized infant, to wean its young affections away from sin, and train them up to God, must prove, under divine grace, a very powerful means of rearing them up in the way they should go. That this duty is seldom performed, cannot be fairly urged, either as an argument against the wisdom of the institution itself; or as a reason why its purpose should not for the future, be more diligently attended to.

It is not my intention here, to discuss and refute those unfounded objections, often alleged by the adversaries of our establishment against the form, in which she commands this sacrament to be administered: nor to contradict those false interpretations, which are commonly put upon the pledge required by her from the sponsors of the child. It would be impossible, indeed, within the limits of this discourse, to bring forward any thing like a clear exposition of the proofs, by which this part of her liturgy may be shewn to be agreeable to Scripture, and consonant to the practice of the primitive church. They may be found ably and clearly set forth, in the labours of those pious men, who have directed their efforts chiefly to this subject. My object has been rather, to induce you to examine these evidences of the scriptural doctrines of the church to which you profess to belong; and when you have searched well and have satisfied yourselves of their excellence, and their accordance with the revealed will of God; to observe them diligently and strictly, and cause your children and dependents to do the same. The scorner's jest is sometimes pointed against these ordinances and rites; and you will do more to expose the falsehood of his revilings, and check the tongue of calumny and misrepresentation, by thus restoring to the church a part of the beauty she

has lost, than if you wrote volumes in her defence.

The extent to which these remarks have been carried, precludes me from dwelling so long, as I had in the first instance intended to have done, upon that peculiar rite of confirmation, the near administering of which, gave rise to the foregoing observations. What has been said however, will apply forcibly, and was intended to be applied to this ordinance also. A solemnity, very similar to this, prevailed amongst the Jews, who brought "their children at the age of thirteen years, to be publicly examined before the congregation, and to make a solemn promise, that they would from thenceforward engage themselves faithfully to observe the law of Moses; after which the prayers of the congregation were offered up, that God would bless and enable them to make good their promise."* Our own church however, derives this rite from the apostolical practice of "laying on of hands;" to which St. Paul so particularly alludes in the 6th chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews. In the early ages of the church, the performance of this office was commonly followed by the gift of miraculous powers. These indeed have long ceased, but the ordinary gifts and graces of the Spirit still remain; and will, we doubt not, still be bestowed

* Wheatly on the Common Prayer,

upon those, over whose heads they have been prayed for by the elders of our church, if they sincerely desire to become partakers in such blessings. The baptism of infants too, is necessarily incomplete, without the observance of this institution; for as the duties of godfathers and godmothers terminate when the child arrives at years of discretion, it is highly proper, that he should, at this important period of his life, renew in his own name his baptismal vow, take upon him the whole armour of God, and go forth to the battle as a Christian soldier.

The solemnity and importance of this duty is, in the present day, like that of baptism, either altogether neglected, or but carelessly observed. And yet there is scarcely, perhaps, an occasion during the whole course of our lives, of more awful responsibility and concern. To you then, especially, my young brethren, who are so soon to be partakers of this sacred rite, I would address a few words of affectionate admonition and exhortation. You are about to renew, in the presence of the true and eternal God, the vow made for you at the time of your baptism. Consider well the holiness and purity of that faith, in which you have thus publicly professed yourselves to be believers. Remember that it binds you to renounce every evil and sinful way; to be pure in thought and word, as well as in action;

“to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ’s faithful soldiers and servants unto your life’s end.”* These are not idle words of mere form and ceremony; they are promises registered in heaven, and you will one day be summoned to render a strict account of the manner in which you have fulfilled them. You are young in years, but not too young to be responsible for your actions, and to obey or disobey the commands of God. You will soon be called upon to mingle more in the world than you have hitherto done; and you will, in consequence, become exposed to the many temptations with which it assails the fortitude of the rash and unwary. Bear in mind, then, my young brethren, that you have solemnly pledged yourselves to renounce these perilous allurements, and to keep yourselves unspotted from their guilt. Let this sacred obligation ever rest upon your souls; for why should you seek to evade it? What satisfaction do you expect to derive from sin, which can compensate for the loss of your own peace of mind, and the dread of the terrors of God’s vengeance? Her paths are open before you, and they seem strewed with fresh flowers and gay delights. But there is a thorn under every blossom, and poison in every

* Office of baptism.

goblet. Thousands before you have tried and found it so. You may, indeed, in your own wilfulness, make the experiment yourselves, and when your health is wasted, your reputation blighted; when the day of disease or affliction comes; when remorse dogs your footsteps, and the thoughts of time mispent, and sins committed, crowd upon your remembrance; you will find, perhaps too late, that there is no peace nor rest to the wicked. The hopes, too, of many an anxious parent, and affectionate relative, are centered in your well-doing. Their care has protected you, when you could not protect yourselves, has toiled for your support, and looks, perhaps, in this world for one only blessing more—to see your hearts established in righteousness, and behold in the infant of their earliest love, a child of God and a disciple of their Redeemer. Oh! blight not, I implore you, by listening to the suggestions of sin, these fair and holy hopes; crush not the bright anticipations of friends and kindred; bring not a father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. God, be assured, will visit you with the terrors of his deadliest wrath, if you thus forget his ways and forsake his laws. Christ died for you, and through him only can you become inheritors of happiness hereafter. But if you take not up your cross and follow his steps on earth; if you confess him not before

men; he will not accept you when he comes again from heaven.

Pray to God, then, that he will vouchsafe to assist you with his grace, that ye may be enabled thus to enter his service with sincerity of heart, and to remain faithful unto the end. You are as soldiers going to the battle; but the combat is not "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Weapons of mortal temper will avail you nothing; you must put on the whole armour of God. Righteousness must be your breast-plate, faith your shield, salvation your helmet, and the Spirit of the Eternal your sword. Thus protected, thus sanctified, you may go forth and conquer; you may trample under foot the wiles of the devil; you may spurn the vain pomp and glory of the world; and be a Christian hero in spirit and in truth. So will you fulfil the sacred contract, made first in your baptismal vow, and renewed in the rite of confirmation. You will uphold the truth and purity of the church to which you belong; and when the sun has set in glory upon your struggles and your victory, you will receive a crown of unfading happiness in that land, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." May God bless you then, and make your goings pros-

per. May he infuse into your hearts a deep sense of your Christian duties, and give you grace to fulfil them. May "he convert your souls, and bring you forth in the paths of righteousness." May he be with you always. May his rod and staff so guide and direct you, that when your feet tread the valley of the shadow of death, you may fear no evil.

SERMON XX.

ISAIAH XXVI, PART OF 9TH VERSE.

When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

AFTER an interval of nearly twenty years, we are again met together,* to confess our manifold provocations and offences as a people; to deprecate the just resentment of heaven, and to implore God to avert from us those calamities and evils, which our sins and iniquities have so righteously deserved. In the times to which I have just now alluded, when these appointed humiliations were of annual recurrence, the scourge with which we were menaced was that of war. To some of my hearers, perhaps, the deeds of those days must be sought for, either in the narratives of others, or in the annals of their country; but there are many, I doubt not, present, who can

* This sermon was preached March 21st, 1832; being the day appointed for a general fast.

remember well the time, when these yearly periods of penitence were religiously observed. It is a grateful task to the Christian patriot to advert to those seasons of gloom and despondency, (which are now, alas! become like a forgotten tale,) when the judgments of heaven seemed about to fall upon our cities and our plains, and England, our country and our home, to be blotted out from the free nations of the earth. It was a dark prospect, my brethren, when the countless legions of our bitterest foes breathed their menaces of invasion upon our shores; when the gleam of the spears, destined to carry carnage and havock into our dwellings, was viewed from the towers of our native land. Tales of horror and of blood were wafted on every gale. We heard of murder, of rapine, of violation: we read that infancy had been no safeguard, age no protection: that the palace and the cottage had been alike polluted, and the altar of domestic happiness turned into a waste of misery and shame. Say, then, ye who were husbands and fathers in those hours of peril, when ye looked round upon the families ye had reared, upon the children of your hopes and cares; when ye thought upon the home which had sheltered your infancy and fostered your later years; did not a shade of sadness settle upon your souls, when ye turned to contemplate the changes that were

to come? When ye trembled lest the smiles which beamed around you, might be changed into tears of misery or shrieks of anguish, and the hearth of your fathers become an Aceldama in a wilderness of desolation?

But in this hour of your distress, God heard your prayer, and saved you from the judgments which had well nigh overwhelmed you. He went forth with your armies to conquest, with your fleets to victory; he dashed invasion from your shores, and guided the vessel of your country's fortunes safe through dangers and difficulties, into a haven of peace and rest. And then, I think, ye were grateful for these mercies. Never, never, will the remembrance of that solemn day, when we all met to thank the great God of battles and of armies for his protection and providence, be effaced from my heart. As a Christian, and as a Briton, I shall cherish it till memory fails, and the pulse of life has ceased to beat. It was, in truth, a glowing and a stirring sight, to behold a whole nation, prostrate before the throne of the King of kings, pouring forth their heart in praise and thanksgivings, because the destroying angel had been stayed in his career. There was cheerfulness on every brow; gladness in every eye, exultation on every tongue. But, alas! this happy temper did not long remain, these emotions of gratitude were soon

effaced. Years past on, and the mercies we had received, the preservation we had found, were forgotten or disregarded. But God is still above, to protect if we humbly ask his protection, to punish if we rebel against his providence. We have rebelled, my brethren, grievously and wickedly rebelled, and he hath sent his judgments upon us, that we may acknowledge our wanderings, and humble our souls before him.

At the present hour, indeed, the horizon of our country is shrouded in mist and gloom, and the sun of her fortunes is journeying amid clouds and tempests. It is not for us to tell, whether he will be permitted, as in other days, to dispel the darkness which surrounds his path; or whether the hour of his setting is nigh at hand. If this latter alternative be that which Providence has appointed, who can say that the infliction is greater than our iniquities have deserved? It is, my brethren, a fearful thing, to look around upon the cities of a Christian land, and see how far their inhabitants are removed from the spirit of him whose name they bear: to see rapine and desolation stalking through their streets; and infidelity and impiety cheering them on to their infernal orgies. God has blessed us, my brethren, with plenty; he has "dropped fatness upon the dwellings of the wilderness, and made the little hills rejoice on every side." And were

we grateful for this bounty? Did we all join to thank his providence for a boon, which rich and poor, in their various degrees and conditions, must alike proportionally enjoy? All did not join; some there were, and those, I fear, not few, who spurned these gifts of their Creator, and made his mercy the means of violating his laws. The flames of malice and revenge burned brightly in our garners and our threshing-floors, and thousands approved, although they did not, perhaps, participate in the crime. The deeds of havoc, too, which have so lately desolated one of the fairest cities* of our empire, are a part of the same fearful spirit of disorder and confusion.

But it is not the effects, my brethren, which should excite our fears, so much as the causes which have led to these results. For to the general decay of religion amongst us, are these miserable consequences chiefly to be attributed. It is not wonderful, that the ignorant and untutored mind, when the restraints of piety have been removed, should spurn at the injunctions of human authority, and give the rein to its wildest passions, without pity or remorse. We have no reason to be surprised, that those, who look forward to no existence beyond the present, should feel little disposed to submit with resignation to the privations and wants which surround them here; or

* Bristol.

that such as strive not to lay up treasures in heaven, should endeavour by any expedient to procure the riches of earth. And let it not be thought, that in these reflections upon the excesses, into which so many of my poorer brethren have been betrayed, I am dealing forth censures with a partial hand. I attribute much of that unchristian animosity, now so prevalent amongst the lower ranks of society, to those feelings of pride and presumption, which the wealth and dignities of the world are too apt to excite in their possessor. It would be happier for us all, if the rigid distinctions, which the absurdities of fashion or caprice, have thrown around the different ranks of society were softened, and to a certain extent removed. There must always be inequalities of condition in human life; a contrary order of things cannot, in the present constitution of human nature, exist without the grossest injustice. It will follow of course from this, that all the tastes and habits of men, will depend much upon the station which they are destined by Providence to fill. Hence intimacies and connexions will generally be formed between persons who move in the same sphere of life, and it is found that arrangements so made, are usually the most productive of solid happiness. But the advantages of birth and opulence, too often induce a belief in the person who enjoys

them, that he is really a superior being to the man, who is not favoured with these adventitious gifts. He may not, indeed, refuse to relieve the distresses of a suppliant to his bounty; but though the alms be given, the kind word and the glance of sympathy are too often withheld. I may not press this subject farther now. It is one, however, which well deserves the attention of all who are exalted upon earth. It is for them to consider, whether they may not, by affability and condescension of demeanour, win back the hearts which their own coldness and pride have contributed so much to estrange, and whether they are not false to themselves, their country, and their God, if they neglect to do so.

But in this respect as well as in others, the present state of things amongst us will know no change for the better, until the inhabitants of our land shall learn righteousness. Whilst the laws of God are openly and daringly violated; whilst our very streets re-echo with impiety and obscenity; whilst the sabbath is habitually profaned, and the profanation justified; we shall hope in vain for more prosperous times. Do we not convert the very liberties, which the bounty of Providence has preserved to us through a long succession of dangers and difficulties, into an offence against his majesty? Is not the free press, (one of the greatest privileges which civilization

has bestowed on man,) too often turned into an engine for corrupting the public mind, and seducing it into infidelity and sin? And has it not been our lot to see,—what perhaps was never seen before, and what my tongue almost refuses to record,—the great God of heaven and earth, “the God of the Christians,” as he was called by the blasphemer, imaged forth with mad and frantic impiety; and the accursed picture, worthy of the demon who suggested the design, suspended for every wayfarer to gaze upon. And it passed, my brethren, almost uncensured. The foulest, the most atrocious insult ever offered to the Creator of the universe, was stamped with no brand of public scorn, was punished with no mark of man’s disapprobation. Is not a temple of blasphemy publicly opened in the metropolis of the empire? Are not societies formed and meetings held, for the propagation of infidelity and irreligion?

These are instances, I am aware, of aggravated guilt; and it may be said, perhaps, that it is scarcely just to charge them upon the community at large. They do but shew however what man is, when religion has ceased to exert her influence upon his heart: they are but sparks of the same flame, which, but a few years since, raged over the whole extent of a powerful empire, and may again, perhaps at no very distant

period, burst forth with wider ravage than before. This at least all will confess, that a fearful apathy and indifference about religion, pervades all ranks and all classes of society. Its decencies indeed, and its external ordinances may still be observed, but its spirit and its fervour are well nigh gone. Men are in these days easily talked or laughed out of their devotion. Some scurril jest, some taunting epithet, is often sufficient to frighten them from their propriety. We grow bold in vice; and in proportion as we do so, we become timid in virtue. We are ashamed of the Christian's hope, the Christian's trust; we think ourselves to be something; we rave of human genius and human intellect, till we exalt them into deities. We direct our energies and powers to man's political renovation, to his elevation in the ranks of an earthly kingdom; whilst we think not of that renewing of the Spirit, that regeneration of the soul, which can alone fit him for an inheritance in the mansions of eternal rest. Our thoughts, our hopes, our anxieties, are all for this world, all for the treasure that perisheth, the garments that will decay. Heaven is forgotten; or, if not so, is regarded as some contingency, which we may have recourse to when we become satiated with the pleasures of earth.

“And will not God visit for these things,” will not his soul “be avenged on such a nation as

this!" He has visited us, my brethren; he is already come for vengeance; but in his wrath, he still remembers mercy. He has sent tumults and perplexities amongst us, he has afflicted us with the noisome pestilence. Death is abroad in his most appalling form. However we may disguise the truth, however we may strive to allay our own fears, there is a plague in our land of a new and fearful character. Whatever its name may be, whether or not it is to be identified with diseases, hitherto confined to another zone; it is a visitation, which has not hitherto desolated *our* shores, and which is far more fatal in its effects than any disorder common to our climate. Would we see more of God's judgments? Turn we to the western waves, and we shall there behold a fair and fertile land, one of the brightest gems of the ocean, changed into a waste howling wilderness of sin and shame. The light of God's blessed word has been kept from the souls of her children; its hopes, its promises, its doctrines, have never been read at the peasant's home, have never cheered the peasant's heart. What wonder then, if he roam over the mountains of his native land more like a savage than a man; and execute with his own hands the plans which his own unhallowed passions have devised. Yet have I said, and I repeat again, that all these visitations, fearful as they are, are but the chas-

tenings of a Parent who pitieth us, as a father pitieth his children. God has seen our transgressions and our backslidings, and has scourged us that he may bring us back to the fold we have forsaken, and the path from which we have strayed.

When wickedness prospers, and its enterprises are crowned with success; when it revels in plenty, and in the gratification of all its desires; it is not strange that the sinner should forget there is a God above, and that for all these things he will call him to judgment.* In the days of his prosperity, the voice of reproof or of exhortation will be raised in vain. He judges of the future by the present, and deems that "to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." Scripture every where represents a state like this as one of imminent danger. "Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth," saith St. James, "and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter." "Wo to them that are at ease in Zion," is the denunciation of the prophet Amos. And Jeremiah affords us another testimony. "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lees." The greatest blessing which can befall such persons as these is the approach of some great af-

* Dr. S. Clarke's Sermons, Vol. vi, Sermon XII.

fiction, which, like the application of the cautery to a diseased limb, may rouse them from their lethargy and self-delusion, and convince them at once of their errors and their danger. The still small voice of conscience may be, and is often, stifled; the tumult of the passions, the turmoil of pleasure, may drown its gentle whispers; but when the fire and the earthquake come, when "thy judgments, O God, are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

If the calamities, with which we are now afflicted, become indeed the means of recalling us from our evil ways, and bringing us back to God's paths of pleasantness and peace, happy shall we be in such a case. In the midst of the gloom and despondency which now reign around us, there is still consolation in reflecting, that the clouds which darken our sky may yet melt away, and the plains of our country be again gladdened by the sunshine of more prosperous times. We have been preserved, my brethren, wonderfully and mercifully preserved, through a long series of changes and revolutions, in safety and in honour. No hostile foot has trodden upon our shores; no hostile hand has invaded the sanctuary of domestic peace, or violated the graves of our fathers' rest. Look round, my brethren, on the wide continent to which we belong; can you find one nation which has been so protected, one

spot of earth so sacredly preserved? Let all then who love their native land, all to whom its prosperity and its honour are dear, bow down in humble gratitude before the great Ruler of its destinies, and praise him for his mercies past. Let them receive with meekness his fatherly corrections, acknowledge their own iniquities, and repent, and return to him. A general reformation must be preceded by individual amendment. Strive to correct your own errors, and you will then see more clearly to rectify the mistakes of other men. A good Christian is the best subject and the best citizen. Bear this in mind, and you may yet redeem your country. . .

. . . If, however, we remain unmoved by these inflictions of Providence, if these last severest calls to repentance fail in their due effect, our situation will become desperate and without hope. The issue of such hardness of heart we cannot indeed foresee. We may, like the guilty cities of the plain, be overwhelmed by some sudden and fearful desolation; or, which is perhaps the more probable, we shall be left to ourselves. And this latter state is the more dangerous of the two; it is the greatest of all God's temporal curses. "I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery." And this rejection by our Maker is but a natural consequence of our

disregard of his chastisements. "I have given you want of bread in all your places," was God's expostulation with the impenitent Jews, "and have withholden the rain from you, and have smitten you with blasting and mildew; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt; your young men have I slain with the sword; I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrha; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." But let us return. Let us seek the Lord while he may be found, let us call upon him while he is near; so shall we with his blessing, instead of weeping over the remembrance of our country by the waters of a distant land, hail its renovation with gladness, and kiss with gratitude the rod which chastened but to save.

SERMON XXI.

ISAIAH LXIII, 1.

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

THE sun has risen but twice upon our earth,* since we met together to solemnize, with grateful and pious remembrance, the death of our great Redeemer on the hill of Calvary. Our thoughts then, must have been mingled with emotions of sorrow and indignation, when we turned in imagination to the fatal tree, and beheld the insults and cruelties inflicted upon one, who came down on earth but to succour and to save. For although we knew that he died in order that we might live; that he suffered in order to preserve us from suffering; yet it was a mournful and an humiliating reflection, that our sins and our perverseness had rendered necessary so

* Preached on Easter Sunday.

mighty a sacrifice. Such at least should have been the impressions, which the anniversary of our Redeemer's death excited within us; such should have been the blended sentiments of thankfulness and remorse, with which we welcomed the return of so hallowed a time. If we thus made it a season of examination and self-abasement; if we turned our hearts in grateful acknowledgement to God for his goodness, and at the same time felt and confessed our own unworthiness of such compassion; that day was not passed in vain. For every circumstance which tends to shew us our own infirmities and our own necessities, brings us one step nearer to holiness. Every thing which makes us acquainted with our natural depravity; every thing which causes us to distrust our own strength; is an advance in the road to heaven. Whilst one thought of our innate virtue lingers behind; one emotion of self-congratulation upon our own good deeds, swells in our hearts; one spark of pride and presumption lurks within us; we are yet without that true spirit of humility and meekness, in which alone we can fittingly receive the free mercies of God. Think you that Christ died to save such as scarcely feel their need of a Redeemer? Think you that he will sprinkle with his precious blood, those who fancy themselves pure enough without his intercession? There is

one religion of the lips, my brethren, and another of the heart, and there are many in the world who have the one in abundance, but possess not one grain of the other. The particulars of our blessed Saviour's sacrifice may be loudly and eloquently discanted upon, and with the same indifference as any topic of earthly interest. But no benefit can accrue from such remembrance as this, where the heart is not warmed; nor the spirit chastened. Christ hath died in vain, Christ hath risen in vain for us, if his death and resurrection are regarded only as subjects of wonder and enquiry. The gracious purpose of these stupendous instances of God's compassion and mercy, is only then answered, when the soul becomes subdued by their influence; when a sense of its utter helplessness compels it to seek for succour in some stronger arm; to trust to the care of its Almighty Parent for every good it hopes for in this life or the next; to become in a word like that of a weaned child. It is only in this temper and frame of mind, that we can, with profit to ourselves, come to the contemplation of God's judgments and God's works. It is only with such a spirit that we can fully appreciate his mercies, and "taste how gracious the Lord is." Let us then, beseeching God to bestow upon us these dispositions, and having wept over the cross where our Redeemer suffered, turn to a

brighter scene, and contemplate him, not a dying captive, but a triumphant king ; not a victim, but a victor of the grave.

There is in the words of my text a sublime and glowing spirit, which harmonizes well with the feelings of every pious heart, that desires to meditate upon this gracious fulfilment of God's long-looked for promises. Well is Isaiah termed the evangelical prophet ; for no Christian heart could have glowed with a holier ardour, no Christian tongue could have burst forth into a more triumphant hymn, than that of this inspired revealer of God's mysterious ways. Let your thoughts rest, as they should do this day, upon the empty sepulchre and the angelic heralds of Christ's resurrection at Jerusalem : let them reflect upon the conquest he had won, upon the powers of hell laid prostrate, and the valley of the shadow of death, cleared of the foes who had hitherto surrounded it with terrors. View in imagination the mighty warrior who had achieved all these glorious conquests, returning as it were from the field of victory, to tell the captive nations that they were free. Then take up the song of the prophet, and say, if every line of fire does not find in your breasts a chord responsive to its sacred harmony. " Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah ? this that is glorious in his apparel, travel-

ling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth."

How beautifully, in these words, does Isaiah describe, ages before it occurred, the deliverance which we are this day assembled to solemnize. He introduces some inhabitant of Jerusalem gazing on the road which conducted to Edom. The inhabitants of this land, who were the posterity of Esau, seem to have been possessed of an hereditary antipathy to the descendants of Jacob. They were frequently indeed subdued; but upon every fresh opportunity, they broke forth into new acts of violence and rebellion. In particular, when

the Babylonians invaded Judea, the Edomites united with them; and even after they had retired, continued to exercise measures of the greatest cruelty towards the Jews, and to cry against Jerusalem, "down with it, down with it, even to the ground." In accordance, then, with a custom so common with the prophets, of putting the inveterate foes of the commonwealth of Israel to express the mortal and immortal enemies of the souls of God's people, Isaiah represents the kingdom of death by the land of Edom, and the seat of the prince of darkness by its capital, Bozrah.* Let us bear this in mind, and examine briefly the sublime description. As the eyes of the Israelite are turned in anxious foreboding towards the land of his persecutors, he beholds a single warrior coming from the hated shores,—his garments red with the blood of battle—his march, the march of the mighty—his glance, the glance of a conqueror. Onward he comes in majesty and power: the astonished Israelite greets him with a voice of enquiry, though the enquiry is mingled with triumph. "Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" Mark the answer, my brethren, it is the language of no earthly victor, it tells of no earthly conquest. "I

* Bishop Andrews.

that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." The reply excites still more the wonder of the enquirer. This glorious soldier is single and alone. He comes not with the shouts of banded legions, at the head of an army trained to battle and to victory. There is mystery as well as terror in his presence; and though he bears the stains of combat, yet the causes, and the issue of the fight from which he comes, are not understood. "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?" And now comes the wondrous announcement: "I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me. I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me."

There is something in this sublime dialogue, which tells plainly that the lamp of the prophet's mind was kindled with fire from heaven, when he thus sung of conquest and of freedom. The language he used, indeed, was the language of earth. The heavenly victor was arrayed as an earthly warrior, was hailed as the hero of an earthly struggle; and yet, wonderful as it is, the description is unearthly in all its details, unearthly in the conflict, unearthly in the conqueror. The sons of Edom had bent before the strength of

Judah in other days ; the glad tidings of victory had echoed within the walls of Jerusalem, and the herald of success had been greeted on his return from Bozrah. But when David warred against Edom, when he trod in triumph upon her plains, although God led him forth and brought him into the strong city, yet was the conquest achieved by the ordinary means of human warfare. He had wise captains and well-trained legions ; and though the God of battles was on his side, yet it was with his hosts he went forth. But the hero whom Isaiah tells of, found none to help, none to uphold him ; his own arm brought salvation, his own fury sustained him. He trod the wine-press, he trampled upon the people ; but he trod it alone, and in the path of his desolation no second footsteps followed. Conceive, my brethren, if you can conceive, and if I may so far dilate upon the prophet's theme, a field of combat, on which flight and terror are ranging, and death following behind. Over this fearful plain of carnage, one warrior, and but one walks triumphant ; his single arm bath scattered a kingdom's might, the blasting of his breath alone hath sent terror into ten thousand hearts. Think you that that can be a mortal champion ? Can any child of the dust be gifted with such omnipotence ? Even so, when we contemplate the glowing picture of the prophet, we

feel that he tells not of earth, nor of any of the sons of earth, although the colours with which he paints, are moistened with water from an earthly fountain. Much indeed as Isaiah abounds in images of grandeur, in thoughts of sublimity and beauty; in no passage, perhaps, of all his glorious shadowings, are these more vividly displayed, than in that we are now considering. The tongue of fire which sat upon the heads of the apostles, seems also to have guided him.

And yet the simple narrative of the fulfilment of this prophecy, thus announced in terms of immortal beauty, though clothed in humbler language, is yet not less striking and effective. Our great Redeemer trod not his earthly pilgrimage alone; his chosen followers were few in number, but strong, for a time at least, in their zeal and attachment to him. The day of battle came: of battle not with the powers of earth, but the spirits of hell; not with the weapons of mortal warfare, but with the armour of faith and obedience. The Saviour was, as it seemed, betrayed into the hands of men, led away in captivity and bondage by the children of the spiritual Edom. He looked around, but there was none to help him; the companions of his sojournings and his journeyings had forsaken him and fled. They feared the powers that were arrayed against him, they trembled before the hosts whom the angels

of darkness had banded together. One, and one only, ventured to follow from afar, and he, with more than a coward's terror, thrice denied the master whom he served. Then came the mockery of a trial and a judgment—the false witness—the malice and perjury of the accuser—the indifference and timidity of the judge—the shout and the self-imprecated curse of the multitude—the crown of thorns—the purple robe—the mockery of royalty—the buffet, the taunt, and the gibe—the procession to the place of death, and the closing scene of this tragedy of persecution and cruelty. Hitherto, perhaps you will say, the resemblance between the type and antitype is but small; the one speaks of conquest, the other of captivity; the one of glory, the other of death. But it must be remembered, that the prophet tells of the warrior returning in triumph from the fight; our narrative, as yet, has dwelt only upon the first shock of the battle. But, besides this, there is a greater similarity even here, than a hasty comparison may induce us to believe. Through all these varied scenes of insult and injury, although man deemed he had, and the spirits of darkness hoped they had, the upper hand; yet was our gracious Lord treading the path to victory, and making his foes his footstool. The Son of God came not down on earth to spread his glory there, by trampling upon the misguided nations who rejected him,

and making them drunk in his fury, but to save and to succour that which was lost. He came by perfect obedience to atone for our rebellions; he came to overturn the kingdom of Satan, by suffering and yet withstanding all his temptations. Every fresh mark of contumely, then, which he underwent without repining, was but the forerunner of final success. But let us proceed, and follow the sacred body of our Lord from the cross to the sepulchre in the garden. It was known in Jerusalem, that he had predicted his resurrection on the third day; and the Jews, therefore, in order, as they imagined, to prevent his disciples from stealing the body away, procured the stone which closed the mouth of the tomb to be sealed, and guarded by a band of Roman soldiers. So far all seemed well; every chance of imposture had been removed, and they waited but for the morrow, to produce the lifeless form, and triumph in the exposure.

But what is man's wisdom, when set to controvert the purposes of the Almighty? The sabbath sun went down; his last rays flashed upon the spears of the warriors, who kept watch around this hallowed spot. Nor were the hours of night unblessed by the light of heaven. The paschal moon arose, and shed her beams of brightness upon the bed of her Creator's rest. That night indeed was a blessed and a solemn time; it has

but one counterpart in the annals of the world—the night when the birth of the Messiah was announced to the shepherds in the fields. The hours past on, and yet no change was seen, no signs announced the Redeemer's return to life. And was the gracious Master, the kind and compassionate friend so soon forgotten? Did no one visit his grave, no one come to see the place where the Lord lay? Two women came, my brethren—came in their faith and undying affection—came to weep over the remains of the being they so deeply loved. The light of another morning, aye, the dawn of the first Christian Sabbath, beamed upon the world. 'Twas ushered in by God's own hand, and the terrors of his power. The earth shook to her centre; it was the signal of the Redeemer's triumph: the conqueror had returned from Edom, and had trod the wine press in Bozrah. And where are the watchmen of the foe, where are the boasted guards that were to preserve the tomb from molestation? They are fled; those perhaps who had never fled, had never feared before, fled now and trembled as they fled. But the door of the sepulchre is guarded still, though the stone is rolled away. A fair and glorious sentinel is stationed there. The angel of Jehovah had withered with his glance the proud array of the warriors of earth, and unbarred the gates of the grave. The light-

ning of his countenance, the radiance of his robes of snow, had sent a death-like fear into the hearts of all who gazed upon his brightness. No, not all; the two daughters of Jerusalem, who had come to mourn—had come to embalm with the tears of affection the tomb where their Lord reposed—were cheered and soothed by this herald of life and immortality. “Fear not ye,” he exclaimed, “for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

And now again I ask you, was not this wonderful prophecy as wonderfully fulfilled? Was not the reality as glorious as the image by which it was foretold? For me little remains, but to exhort you not to suffer the reflections which, by God's blessing, may have been excited within you, to die away and be forgotten. Let them fill your hearts with gratitude and praise; and whilst the remembrance of your own sins and your own frailties, presses heavily upon your souls; forget not that the staff upon which you lean was plucked from the tree of life; that the Redeemer in whom you trust, is a Redeemer who speaks in righteousness, and is mighty to save.

SERMON XXII.

DEUTERONOMY VI, 6, 7, 8, 9.

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

It is impossible for any serious reader to peruse the book of Deuteronomy, without being forcibly struck by the impressive solemnity, with which the Jewish lawgiver enforces upon his countrymen the necessity of obedience to the divine commands. The most consoling promises are held out to those who should keep them in sincerity and truth; and the most fearful judgments are denounced against all who should neglect or despise them. Moses doubtless was anxious to

spend his last hours in endeavouring to strengthen the Israelites in their knowledge and love of the truth ; and he deemed that words uttered then would be held more sacred than any of his former injunctions and admonitions. For he was drawing near the close of his long and eventful life ; and though “ his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated,” he was preparing to go down to the grave, and leave the superintendence of his beloved, yet still rebellious countrymen, to other hands. His exhortations, therefore, so delivered, would have the effect of a warning from the death-bed ; and his voice in them, might continue to rebuke and encourage his people, long after the lips from which it issued had mouldered into dust. The last lessons of a man so eminently endowed, so divinely inspired, as Moses was, must be replete with matter of the most interesting and edifying kind. He addressed indeed a people differently situated from ourselves ; and therefore, in some parts of his admonitions, perhaps, his precepts may not be altogether so applicable to our own circumstances. But this will seldom be the case. We shall find rather, that his solemn injunctions, his most impressive advice, will be as suitable to the Christian worshipper, as they were to the Jewish ; and that when he enforces, by sanctions the most holy, the observance of the law upon the descendants of Abraham, he inculcates

on the disciples of Christ, an obedience no less strict and imperative.

I have selected the words of the text, as especially calculated to convey a most necessary and salutary lesson to us all; a lesson, alas! by too many amongst us entirely neglected, and to which neglect, we may probably attribute much of the sin and vice by which our land is deluged. The great doctrine which Moses had just been delivering was that of deep and fervent love to God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." He then proceeds to shew how this precept especially, and others also which he had delivered concerning high and holy matters, ought to be observed. You will perceive the entire devotion of the heart to God's service which he demands: "these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart." He designs to warn the Israelites from that lip service, that merely external obedience, which they were so prone to pay; and which became afterwards the shame and ruin of their nation. He then explains how this religion of the heart must be exercised in outward acts; how it will operate upon their conduct, and influence them in the daily concerns of life.

Now herein the Christian may read his duty, as did the Hebrew of old. What better precep

can be given to him, than that he should love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might. He has, besides, a cause of gratitude and joy, to which the brethren of Moses were almost, if not entirely, strangers. The mercies of redemption, which those wanderers of the desert never beheld, or beheld but dimly, have been made known to us in their full extent and brightness. To God, therefore, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, we owe a debt so deep and so increasing, that we must ever remain utterly unable to repay the smallest portion of its demands upon our gratitude. But God, in his goodness, requires no payment. His mercies are all free. But he demands that we should give him our hearts, that we should serve him in holiness and unfeigned sincerity. So then you see that the same command of love to God, is enforced alike in the Mosaic and the gospel dispensations. Every precept therefore of the Jewish lawgiver, which was designed to assist the Israelites in cultivating this love to God, must be equally important and instructive to us. And we shall find in the words of our text, a solemn duty enjoined, which, it is to be feared, the Christian of the present day neglects as sinfully, as did the Jew of former years.

The injunction of Moses presents us with four different views of the subject on which he

is speaking, namely, that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart. These views indeed, are all parts of the same great principle, though somewhat differently shaded. He first commands us to teach God's laws to our children; "thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children." He then adverts to the necessity of thinking and speaking of them, both in our communion with our own families, and in our intercourse with the world. "Thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." He next enjoins us to shew ourselves to our brethren, as God's servants; not to seek to conceal our devotion to him, but to make it as open and undisguised as the day. "Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes." And lastly, he directs that the seal of piety shall be set upon our households; "and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thine house, and on thy gates."

You will readily perceive, I doubt not, my brethren, the nature of these four several admonitions of the prophet; you will see how they all tend to one point, the establishment of our families in righteousness. The Jewish householder was commanded to make the precepts of his religion the subject of frequent discussion

with his children, and with those around him. They were to be the last words on his lips before he retired to rest, and the first theme of his morning converse. He was to shew, by his own example, his sincere obedience to their injunctions; and so to discipline the inmates of his dwelling in the way of holiness, that the very walls of his house should, as it were, bear upon them the traces of God's word of truth. And is not this lesson of equal importance to us, as Christian parents, and Christian householders? Alas! how many amongst us are there, who do most fearfully neglect the solemn duties which devolve upon us in these several capacities: who, labouring hard indeed for that which shall yield them no sure return, forget the one important end, which it concerns them so nearly to remember. An awful responsibility devolves upon every father and every master, which we are too prone to overlook or despise. Few indeed are those who consider, that when a child is born to their affections, that child may become the heir of everlasting happiness or of eternal misery. We set more value upon the external qualifications of our children, than upon the religious graces shed upon their hearts; nay, it is to be feared, that there are some fathers, who would look with greater delight upon their offspring, when courting the public approval in some gay and giddy

ball-room or public parade, than when bending before the altar of their God in his own temple, or preferring their petitions to his throne of mercy, around the sanctuary of their own hearths; men, who would rather hear the lips of their child pour forth some strain of worldly merriment, than be tuned to God's praise or God's glory.

The general feature, indeed, which parental solicitude assumes, is that of anxiety for our children's temporal prosperity alone. There is ordinarily no absence of the desire to lay up for them the treasure that perisheth. We labour and take thought in order that we may secure to them a provision of this world's goods when we shall be gone. We seek for lucrative situations and prosperous settlements; and we contemplate with pleasurable pride, their probable advancement and comfort in the world. We seek, too, to imbue their young minds with all the graces of worldly wisdom. We select able masters and renowned seminaries, and watch over their progress with the eye of anxiety and hope. The accomplishments which they have learned at school, we teach them to repeat at home; and we praise their powers of memory, or their skill in penmanship; and here our cares for the most part end. We seem as though we deemed it quite enough to have provided for their well-doing and success in this life, and had no concern

whatever in their condition in another state of being. For all these advantages which we strive to procure for them, must perish when their earthly pilgrimage is ended—must crumble into dust when they too go down to the dust. “What shall it profit a man,” said our blessed Lord, “if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” And what will it profit our children—however highly their intellects are adorned with the graces of worldly learning; however richly their coffers are stored with the heaps of worldly wealth—if they know not Christ, and are not rich towards God? The remembrance of this vanity of the best and choicest of human blessings, should, in itself, teach us to bequeath some other legacy to our children, than that which is so frail and so short-lived. But there is one other consideration which ought to operate upon us, in directing our cares to a holier channel, and exciting us to endeavour, with God’s help, to train up our families in the paths of righteousness alone. We calculate too much upon the long lives of our children; we consider that they must inevitably succeed to those provisions which we have been making for them, and if we do hazard a thought upon their eternal state, we are willing to leave the matter to their own judgments, fully calculating that those judgments will have ample time to ripen into maturity. But does not the expe-

rience of every day convince us, that vain and dream-like are such anticipations. How often is the young plant nipped by the blast, when the stubborn trunk is spared. How often does it become the parent's painful office, to close those eyes which he deemed would have gazed upon his own death-bed; and to commit that young body to the dust, whose pious hands might, he hoped, have raised his own tomb. How many that are fathers have wept over their blighted hopes, and been left childless, to bequeath to strangers the lands which they had designed to transmit to those of their own name.

How sacred then is the duty which devolves upon every father, to seek for his children an inheritance which will be theirs, not for a time only, but for eternity; to lead them to lay up treasures which will neither perish nor decay. It is too much the custom to consider children not as responsible creatures; to expect all their sins and frailties to be pardoned, on the score of their youth, and that the same plea of inexperience will be admitted at a heavenly tribunal, which is sometimes found to avail before an earthly one. This may be the language of human reason, but it is not the language of Scripture. We may search God's word from beginning to end; and we shall no where find that an exception from holiness is made in favour of children, or that a

way of salvation is pointed out for them, different from that which their parents are commanded to follow. Faith in Christ Jesus is the only means, by which either father or child may hope to reach God's kingdom of peace and joy. And a fearful responsibility does he incur, who permits his children to grow up, without striving to instil into their young minds the knowledge of their God and Saviour, and to teach them the way to heaven ere their feet have trodden in the paths of hell. It can never be too early to talk to them of their Maker's goodness, when they can understand what is meant by love and kindness. Many have an idea, that, because children cannot comprehend the meaning of an all-powerful Being, who is ever present with them, and who, though invisible to them, sees the very thoughts of their hearts; and that because they do, in consequence of the weakness of their infant intellects, occasionally make strange remarks upon what they hear, it is therefore the better plan to leave the mind a blank upon these high and holy subjects, until it has attained to a more advanced state of judgment and discretion. Surely this is an error, and if it be so, it must be a dangerous one. Oh! believe, that it will be the most righteous plan, to scatter early upon the tender soil, the seeds of religious truth. What sounds so blessed, so delightful to a Christian parent's ear, can fall from

his childrens' lips, as God bless me? Oh! surely if, as our Redeemer said, "their angels do in heaven behold the face of God," he who has appointed these guardian ministers of his infant flock, will hear the infant's prayer, though the tongue which utters it be simple and unlearned. There should never be a time when the child can remember that he began to learn righteousness; never a time when he can say that he knew not the mercies of his Redeemer. If, then, you would bring down a blessing upon your families, teach them early—you never can do it too early—to love God; teach them to look to him for all that is good and merciful; teach them the wickedness and waywardness of their own hearts; and tell them of that gentle Saviour who loves and protects the little child. Oh! what on earth is there so beautiful as the infant's eye when up-raised to heaven, the infant's hands when clasped in prayer and praise. And should it please an all-wise Providence to remove the object of your love from this world of sorrow and sin, say, would not the remembrance of its imperfect supplications, its unformed thoughts of God, bring comfort and peace to your spirits in this day of your anguish and bereavement. Oh! then for the sake of your children, for the sake of yourselves, turn their young souls to God, train them up in the way they should go, and if they live, they

will bless you for this wisdom on earth ; and if they die, their little voices will be heard in blessing in the starry courts of heaven.

But Moses, in the words of our text, contemplates a still wider extension of religious knowledge in our households, than the instruction of our children. The stamp of piety is to be seen, as it were, upon the walls of our dwellings. Many of us are the masters and mistresses of servants ; and we cannot therefore become a holy family, except these members of it are holy too. It is, therefore, our bounden duty, to endeavour to promote the spiritual improvement of our dependants ; to consider them, not as mere hirelings, in whose welfare we are to take no concern, whose eternal interests we are not called upon to advance ; but as fellow creatures, placed indeed by providence in a different sphere of life from ourselves, but our brethren still,—children of the same Father, heirs of the same hopes. Remember too, that the Redeemer of the world himself, once took upon him the form of a servant, and was, for our sakes, pleased, in his mercy, to be more poor, more destitute, than the humblest attendant who obeys our bidding. Now it is greatly to be feared, that these reflections seldom find their way to our hearts ; we do not in general take that delight in beholding our servants righteous, that as Christian masters we

ought to do. We are strict enough in training them to the due discharge of their worldly duties. We do not hesitate to spend much pains and labour in teaching them the offices most agreeable to our domestic habits, and we watch their diligence and attention in these points with scrupulous exactness. But we too frequently shew ourselves almost entirely indifferent to their growth in religious grace: we make few enquiries about their spiritual improvement, we take but little trouble to promote it. The utmost, perhaps, we think ourselves called upon to do, is to place a Bible upon the shelves of our kitchens, and require from our servants that they shall attend a place of public worship once on the sabbath day. But surely, my brethren, God requires more at our hands, than such a negligent superintendence of those whose ways and goings it is our part to direct. This cannot be to write the truths of the Christian faith upon the posts of our houses and upon our gates. We cannot call ourselves a truly Christian family, if the gospel is not more honoured around our hearths. The Scriptures evidently point to masters as persons who are in all things to provide for the necessities of their dependants, and from motives the most holy. "Masters," says St. Paul in his epistle to the Colossians, "give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also

have a Master in heaven." Now, if we are in any respect enjoined to entertain towards our servants but the smallest portion of that love which our blessed Lord entertains for us, it will be shewn in seeking to bring them to taste the same pure and holy waters, which Christ has given for those who are his redeemed on earth. There is something, too, very striking in the language of David in the 123rd Psalm. "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hands of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God until he have mercy upon us." If, then, our servants are to look to us for gifts of good; if there can be the remotest resemblance between God's mercies to man and a master's bounty to his servants; it must be when that master seeks to be the instrument of providence, in diffusing amongst his domestics the glad tidings of salvation, and the promise of pardon through the blood of a crucified Redeemer.

I stay not now to dilate upon the temporal advantages which will result to ourselves, from thus watching over the spiritual necessities of our servants. I stay not now to speak of the peace and comparative tranquillity which will ordinarily reign in a family so regulated, compared with the turbulence and dissensions which too often defile with their unholy schisms, the hearth of domes-

tic life. It is a common complaint, that in these times it becomes a matter of difficulty to procure servants who are active in their master's service, and zealous for his interests. But does not a portion, at least, of the fault rest with ourselves. We may be assured, that in this, as in every other case, we cannot expect good fruit to spring up, except the soil be good in which the seed is sown. You must teach your servants the fear of God, if you would have them do their work with diligence. You must make known to them the riches of a Saviour's love, if you would have them obey you in all things in singleness of heart. But it is, brethren, on a higher motive than the present gain you may expect to derive from such conduct, that I would now rest the grounds on which I urge upon you, the duty of endeavouring, with God's help, to promote their souls' improvement. It is because all have souls to be saved; it is because Christ died for the servant as well as for the master, that I beseech you to consider them as a little flock committed to your care, and to labour diligently, that not one of that fold be lost.

To ourselves, also, the happiest results must inevitably follow, from thus exercising, as it were, the office of the priesthood in our own families, if we are urged to do so by a sincere love to Christ, and not in "eye service as men pleasers." God's

own words, spoken of Abraham, assure us of his blessing upon such labours of love. "Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." But when families meet in the morning, and separate at night, as it is to be feared too many do, without any open and general expressions of thankfulness to God, any common prayers for spiritual guidance and support; the labours of the day become unsanctified, and our dwellings unsprinkled by the dews of devotion. When, on the contrary, the whole circle is assembled around the family altar, when the master of the household reads aloud the mercies and love of our Redeemer, when he points the attention of his children and his dependants to the exhortations and warnings of the gospel, when he kneels in prayer on the same floor, and side by side with those who receive from his hands their daily bread; oh! believe it brethren, that God will breathe a blessing upon his piety, and hallow the roof which shelters his head. There is one great and invisible church, the assembly of God's saints through all the earth; there are visible churches in the

nations of the world ; but there are churches also of an humbler kind, but no less the objects of God's love and care. "Greet Priscilla and Aquila," says St. Paul, "my helpers in Christ Jesus : likewise greet the church that is in their house." And even so, my brethren, ought we to establish a church in our own houses. Jesus has promised that where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is in the midst of them ; and this expression seems peculiarly applicable to the case of a family, thus assembled to present their supplications before the throne of God.

If our view of this subject is correct ; if the master of a family is in many respects to be regarded as the priest of his own household ; it becomes his serious and solemn charge, to minister diligently to those over whom he is appointed to be the overseer. Depend upon it, if God requires us thus to teach his laws diligently to our children, to talk of them at home and abroad, to bind them as a sign upon our hands, and as frontlets between our eyes ; if it be in the pious habits to which we train our families, that he commands us to write his precepts upon the posts of our houses, and upon our gates ; he will visit us with the terrors of his wrath if we neglect so solemn a charge. Remember the judgment which he brought even upon pious Eli, for his want of zeal

in disciplining his children to righteousness: "I have told him," said God himself by the mouth of Samuel, "that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." Let not then, I beseech you, the only conversation you hold with your children, be upon their pastimes or their pleasures; upon the progress they have made in worldly knowledge, or worldly accomplishments. Seek rather to train their young hearts to love the future world better than the present, and God's mercies rather than human follies. There will come a time, my brethren, when the fashion of this earth shall fade away, and we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. And it will be a sound of comfort to the Christian father in that day, to hear the voices of his own children swelling the choir around the throne of the Redeemer. And with your servants too, let not the only intercourse you hold, be upon the offices of their daily labour, or the careful or careless discharge of the duties which devolve upon them: but strive both by precept and example, by prayer and admonition, to bring them also to the knowledge of Christ. Consider yourselves all interested in the great work of salvation; let rich and poor alike feel anxious to make its glad tidings known through all the land. And with this holy hope strong upon your minds,

make your dwellings, as it were, the temples of God, and seek to serve him there, as well as within these sacred walls. And whilst some, in ignorance of the high and holy duties which they are called upon to perform, raise no altar within the privacy of their own homes ; be it your care to let the incense of your morning and evening sacrifice ascend to the throne of grace, and to say, with holy Joshua, to the world around you, " If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve ; but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

SERMON XXIII.

ROMANS X, 17.

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

THE profession of Christianity, my brethren, is one which involves both our temporal and eternal interests so entirely, that it is strange to conceive how men can assume it so lightly and so carelessly, as they too often do. It was truly, indeed, observed by our blessed Redeemer, that "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." For, if we compare the negligent and heedless manner in which men take upon them the name of Christ, with the diligent investigation which they employ, before they enter upon any earthly speculation, we shall too soon discover that the heart is in the one pursuit, but that the heart is not in the other; and we shall immediately be brought to see, that whilst there is wisdom in the care with

which we pursue the treasure that perisheth, there is little real sagacity in the lukewarm spirit with which we seek the riches that are unfading. Now, if we could but impress this solemn truth upon the hearts and understandings of men; if we could only bring them to think that they were sluggish runners in the Christian race, cowardly combatants in the Christian warfare; we should, I doubt not, preach the gospel with better success, and number many more converts within the Christian fold. But unhappily, the nature of the gospel is mistaken, as well as the means by which its promises are to be attained. It is thought sufficient, if we are sealed with the seal of baptism, if we make an outward profession of the gospel faith, and regularly attend some place of public worship: Thousands; it is to be feared, there are, who pass through life with this easy and drowsy piety, and go down to their graves without being aware, until, it may be, conviction comes with the death-stroke, that their religion has been useless, and their faith a barren sound.

Now, that the rite of baptism does give us an entrance into the Christian covenant, we have the sure word of Scripture for believing; and our church enjoins that sacrament upon all her members, as generally necessary to salvation, and deems it perilous for a soul to go down to

the grave, upon whom the baptismal water has never been sprinkled. But we must remember, that it is not in itself a passport to heaven: it is a sign that the guilt of original sin has been removed by the atonement of a Saviour's blood; but it is no sign that we shall, on that account, certainly be made righteous in the sight of God. It may be our bow in the cloud, to remind us that we are saved by Christ's mercies from the fatal consequences of Adam's transgressions; but it gives us no unconditional assurance, that we shall be preserved from the no less disastrous results of our own. It will not act like a charm, either to guard us from the commission of sin, or to protect us from its penalties when we have been guilty of it. The experience of every day may serve to convince us of these important truths; for we do not find, we never shall find, that the sacrament of baptism, high and holy as it is, exercises any infallible influence upon the character or actions of men. The baptized may be, and often are, sinful and unholy in their lives; and we must therefore look to some other period of life than that at which we are brought to the font; some other change in the heart than that effected by the baptismal flood; for that effectual renewing of the Spirit by the inspiration of divine grace, which is termed in the Bible, the putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now it is manifest, that before so entire a change can be produced in the soul, there must be a no less complete revolution in the affections and feelings of the heart. The love of the world must be superseded by the love of the gospel; the lust of pleasure and the lust of wealth must be rooted out, and the hunger and thirst after righteousness must be cherished instead. The thoughts and affections must be trained to think of God and his mercies, rather than upon the excitements of human enjoyment or human gain. There must be a deep sense of the heart's depravity and deceitfulness, and an ardent and holy love for that gracious Redeemer, who hath vouchsafed to shed his precious blood as a ransom for its manifold iniquities. We must think of the concerns of a future state, with far more intensity than we meditate upon the fleeting cares of the present life. Now it will be evident to every inquirer, that such a disposition of heart as this, is not the ordinary temper which pervades the generality of mankind. Hence, then, since God's mercies are unlimited; since no one is shut out from the hope of salvation; since he has promised never to refuse the petition of the sincere penitent; and since also, those who come to him must come with new hearts and new desires; it follows, that at one period or other of our existence, we must be thus renewed by the power of

God's grace, be made sensible of our need of his mercies, and be thereby led to seek, with all our hearts, the blessings of that redemption which Christ has purchased for his repentant creatures. And this is one of those mysterious dispensations of God's providence, into which we may not now attempt to penetrate. Some are thus led to seek him in their early years. A few there may be, perchance, who have loved him, as it were, from their childhood; who, like the infant Samuel, have always walked in the temple of his presence; who have never yielded to the temptations of the world, nor holden up their hands to any strange God. But if such there be, their numbers are comparatively very inconsiderable; and it will generally be found, that we do, for a season at least, forget God, and lead careless and thoughtless lives, if we do not plunge into the guilt of open and profligate sin. But the trumpet tongue of the gospel awakens some from their death-like sleep, ere they have slumbered long, and brings them to the knowledge of God in the spring-time of their being. Others run a longer course of forgetfulness, and incur a deeper risk of eternal sorrow; but they do at last, it may be, see the error of their ways, and return repentant to their Father's house. The brow, indeed, is often stricken with the furrows of age, ere the pang of penitence has shot across the heart; but

whenever the soul is awakened and alarmed, a change comes over its spirit, gradual perhaps, but still entire and effectual. We maintain that this is a truth, evidenced both by actual observation and the sure word of Scripture. For every one, whose experience has ever led him to think seriously upon these things, must have known some, who, having run a heedless, if not a dissipated and licentious course, have rejected the sinful pleasures in which they once took so much delight; have become changed in their habits and feelings; have renounced the world and all its vain and empty delights; and devoted themselves to the contemplation of heavenly things, and to the disciplining of their own souls in the ways of God's commandments. The world indeed, is too apt to think lightly and scornfully of this change of living, this renovation of the heart: and the repentant sinner is not unfrequently reproached with his past transgressions, by those who can neither understand nor appreciate the mighty power which has been working in his heart. But however the giddy or the profane may ridicule the new-sprung piety of the awakened sleeper; there is a fountain fresh opened in his soul, which pours forth incessantly desires, and feelings, and hopes, and fears, which he never knew before; but which he would not now exchange for all the advantages, and profits,

and enjoyments, which the world can offer him. This is the change of which we are speaking, and we appeal to the conscience of every soul in this congregation, whether he has not either heard of, or witnessed, this hallowed transformation; whether he will not acknowledge, (however lightly he may think of such alterations,) that there are persons who once took no pleasure in the duties of religion, who heeded not the abundance of the Saviour's mercies, but who now visit the courts of God's temple with constant and joyful feet, and have found that faith in Christ, by which alone they can be justified in his sight before whom they stand.

And this is precisely that renewing of the heart, of which we read in the Bible so frequently and so impressively. The prophet Ezekiel has a very striking passage upon this subject; particularly impressive, because it is the record of one, who lived long before the sound of the gospel had echoed through the world. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." In the New Testament, a frequent phrase by which this change is denoted, is that of being born of God. Thus

it is said, in the 1st chapter of St. John's gospel, in speaking of Christ, that, "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name : which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And the same apostle, in the 5th chapter of his first general epistle, declares that, "whosoever is born of God, overcometh the word : and this is the victory that overcometh the word, even our faith." St. Peter also, in the 1st chapter of his first general epistle, speaks of Christians as "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." St. Paul bears the most ample testimony to this solemn truth. He declares, in the 5th chapter of his second epistle to the Corinthians, that "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature." And to the Galatians he writes, that "neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." And in his address to the Ephesians, he speaks most forcibly to them upon this all-important subject. "But ye have not so learned Christ ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus : that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts ; and be renewed in the spirit of your

mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Now, this being the language of Scripture, we are naturally led from it to expect, that there shall be a very decisive difference, not only in the inward thoughts, but also in the words and actions, between those who are born of God, and those who have not yet put off the old man with his deeds; and that at one epoch or other of our lives, this change must come over the spirits of all who become the sons of God. My brethren, there is much in this consideration to awaken our most serious attention, and call forth all our fears. Do not, I beseech you, if you desire the blessings of God's inheritance, if you dread the misery which must be your portion, if you fail in attaining his promised blessings, do not treat this subject lightly, nor banish it from your thoughts for a future consideration. It is God, remember, who speaks these solemn words which I have just now quoted from his own revelations; and if you heed them not, yours will be the guilt, and yours the shame, of having ears to hear, but refusing to listen. If no such change as that we have spoken of, has yet come over your spirits; if you have lived on, and are still living on, from year to year, with the same thoughts and feelings upon religion; if there is no warmer glow of

piety in your hearts to-day than there was twelve moons ago ; if the Saviour's mercies are not more deeply cherished on this sabbath of God's love, than they were when you last met after the commemoration of his ascending up on high,* be assured that you are not yet the sons of God, that you have not yet put on Christ, that you are not yet clothed with the garments of salvation. Do not, I beseech you, shrink from an inquiry into the state of your own souls on this most solemn point ; do not, because the ways of the world seem pleasant in your eyes, and because you think that the service of God will call upon you to renounce their transient enjoyments, hesitate for one moment to resign all the advantages which the former can give you, in order that you may become members of the household of the Lord ; for " what shall it profit a man," my brethren, " if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?" Seek ye then to preserve your souls " as a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice," upon the altar of Christ ; pray that they may be purified by that blessed change which we have seen must transform the hearts of all, who desire to be welcomed hereafter into the joys of the Redeemer's kingdom. Seek for this grace of God—seek it as the best blessing his mercy can

* This sermon was preached on the Sunday after the day of our Lord's ascension.

bestow ; as the gift which ye desire most of all to receive. Oh ! believe, that if you search for happiness—aye, if you search for happiness in this world,—you will find it, not in the tumultuous resorts of pomp and pride—not in the busy marts of gain and speculation—not in the polluted haunts of vice and guilty revelling, but in the pursuit of that wisdom which cometh from above ; in those blessed abodes of Christian piety, whose “ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace.” And if you desire to reign hereafter in heaven, if you covet those joys which are at God’s right hand, oh ! let your first and latest prayers be, that your souls may be renewed by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, that “you may perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his holy name ;” * that you may feel the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God.

To some perhaps, the preceding observations may seem to have little connection with the words of our text ; and yet the reflections which they contain, spring naturally from the important truth which the language of the apostle conveys. For if the faith in Christ be thus attended by a change so entire and so decisive ; if the thoughts, and feelings, and affections, must be turned into a new channel ; and if, moreover, we are too

* Communion service.

commonly forgetful of this solemn lesson; it seemed necessary, first to endeavour to prove to you, with God's blessing, the absolute necessity of such a change, and then to shew you from the language of Scripture, how that faith may be found by which this holy transformation will be effected. "Faith," says the apostle, "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The meaning of St. Paul in this passage is plain and forcible. Faith comes upon the soul by hearing God's holy word proclaimed and enforced. Now the apostle evidently does not mean to say that hearing is *one* of the means by which our hearts are warmed into faith; but that it is the *chief* instrument, by which souls are won to the gospel of the Redeemer. And we adore in this, the mercy and goodness of God. We acknowledge, too, the truth of his sacred revelations as confirmed by our own experience. "Faith cometh by hearing," is not a speculative doctrine on which doubts may be entertained by some; which may be pleaded for or opposed with almost equal plausibility; it is not a doctrine partially or imperfectly revealed, of which we know and can know nothing, except from the pages of God's written word, and for the full and final understanding of which, we must wait until the time when all that is secret shall be made known; but it is a truth of which we have ourselves daily

demonstration, or at least, we may have, if we take the trouble to enquire. Many a stubborn heart has been softened; many a careless soul has been awakened from its deathful sleep; many a reckless profligate has been roused to mourn over his guilt and his shame, and turned to a brighter and holier path; by the word of God's truth sent by the Spirit to his heart, with the trumpet-sound of conviction and of fear. These are facts, God be praised, not of unfrequent occurrence; and they are facts which do most powerfully prove, that God's purpose shall stand, and that the means of grace which he has appointed, are those best calculated to promote his glory.

The public preaching of God's word indeed, is in its nature most excellently calculated to spread abroad the tidings of his love; to reach the souls of the thoughtless and indifferent, to alarm their fears, and cause them to seek those mercies which they have hitherto disregarded or despised. For is it not an indisputable truth, that there are thousands who come to church, but who never read their bibles at home; thousands, who, if God's judgments and God's warnings are not poured into their ears during the hours of public worship, are never likely to hear them at any other time. True indeed it may be, and we know it is, that the motive which guides the many to the house of God, is not, in general, that by which

they ought to be influenced. The spring of curiosity, the desire of seeing the appearance of their neighbours and acquaintances, the gratification of personal vanity, the wish to stand well in the opinion of the more thinking part of the world, or some other impulse, it may be, more unholy still than these, do frequently draw men to the temple of Jehovah, who would, it is probable, never be led within it by a more hallowed feeling. But whilst we condemn and deplore the perverse and mistaken principles, upon which so many of our fellow-creatures are induced to put on as it were the cloak of hypocrisy, and make in effect a pretence of religion, not one spark of which is lurking in their hearts; we can still see and acknowledge the goodness and long suffering of our Maker, who thus vouchsafes to turn the carelessness and weakness of his sinful creatures, not unfrequently to his own glory, and their eternal and heavenly joy.

It has been beautifully said by one of our own poets,* in speaking of the zealous preaching of a Christian pastor, that

“Fools who came to scoff, remained to pray;”

and it is no very uncommon thing for the word of God to strike awe and terror into the souls even of those, who have been brought into the sanctuary by far other motives than those of

* Goldsmith.

godliness. It is this hope of their being roused from their palsyng trance, of their being called into the practice of vital holiness, that makes us hail with joy, the presence of all within the house of Jehovah, whatever may have been the motives which have brought them there. If I were to hear the veriest profligate that ever walked the face of God's earth, boast that he was going to church even to plan and devise schemes of still greater wickedness ; oh ! not by one word, one breath, would I seek to turn him from his purpose, unhallowed as the feelings were which led him on. No, I would rather speed him on his way ; I would watch him with anxiety as he entered the sacred gates : and though there were thousands within them, and many, too, devoted to the practice of Christian piety ; yet not one soul of all that assembled multitude, should I more rejoice to look upon, than this unsanctified and godless transgressor. I would hope and pray, that God in his mercy would send his word like the lightning-flash upon his soul ; that the solemn truths of the Gospel might startle him from his dreams of sin and madness ; that like the king of Babylon, he might see the fearful hand tracing on the very walls around him in characters of living fire, "thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting." I would pray God to give the preacher that day, a double por-

tion of energy and boldness; that his exhortations and his warnings might fall like coals of fire on the sinner's head, and melt down his pride, his presumption, and his stubbornness of heart.

It is cheering, indeed, to the Christian to reflect, that wicked as the world is—lost as, on a general view, it seems to be to the voice of religion—there is yet one mighty engine at work, powerful enough, by God's help, to preserve alive the flames of gospel holiness, and to convert even the most reckless offender into the zealous disciple of his Redeemer. We acknowledge, in the working of this gracious power, the sacred truth of the apostle's words, that "faith cometh by hearing;" and we adore God's goodness, which thus provides that all shall hear his word, and that if any perish it will be through their own folly, or their own disobedience. We may look upon the preaching of the word as an act of man's contrivance; as a formal part of the worship appointed by particular societies of Christians. We may view it as an effort of eloquence in the minister, or as a new field for the criticism and comments of his hearers. But if this were all, it would be but the powerless effort of human wisdom, and sapless as the withered trunk, or the broken reed. But it is God's own institution, and we see in its effects the working of his mighty hand. We have a proof before us

now, that he vouchsafes to bless it to his own glory and our eternal joy. Of those present in this congregation, many, it cannot be doubted, have been induced to come from no fervid emotions of piety, but from motives more or less removed from holiness. If we could look into the souls of some who hear me, and forget that God's hand is in the work, we should almost start with surprise at finding such visitors to the house of prayer. Here are, we doubt not, persons brought together, almost as it were, by some mysterious and over-ruling influence, acting ostensibly by means of their own natural inclinations and propensities, to hear that sacred word of everlasting truth, which no persuasion, probably, could induce them to read. We have persons here, who never pray in sincerity to God; who, during the whole of the week, never raise a thought or a hope to him. We see the scoffer, the blasphemer, and the unbeliever, brought into the sanctuary: the profane swearer, the drunkard, the adulterer, the foul and filthy jester,—all, (strange as it may seem, and strange as it does seem,) come here in turn, to hear those fearful and awful judgments which denounce them as outcasts from God, and tell them of the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that is never quenched. Oh! it can surely be no work of man, which can thus call together those who mock at piety,

to listen to its warning voice ; and can compel the brazen libertine, and the brawling scoffer, to sit still in silence and hear those truths proclaimed, as the only way of salvation, which it is the business of their lives to deride or despise. God's providence is here, as surely and as truly shewn, as though he had interrupted the course of nature for our conviction.

But, my brethren, there is another point in which we must view these solemn gatherings of all persons to hear the word of God, than simply as the means of their conversion to him. They are his calls to repentance, his summons to the slothful labourers, to enter his vineyard. Every man who has heard the gospel-truth to-day, has been as effectively called as if an archangel's trumpet-blast had thundered in his ears ; and if he neglects this call—if he retires to his home with a heart unsoftened, a spirit still impenitent—on his own head will fall the guilt, and the shame, and the sorrow, of having been one of the called, but not one of the chosen.

My brethren, lay these things seriously to heart. Let not the mercies which are daily passing around you, be neglected or overlooked, because they are of common occurrence. May you feel that the preaching of God's word, is his own appointed way of bringing men to the " truth, as it is in Jesus : " and may you all seek these means

of grace, with the humble hope of finding the peace which passeth understanding. And let not your own steps be the only ones you turn to the house of God. Seek to lead others there—seek especially to bring the sinner within the sound of the glad tidings of gospel-love. The time will come when the Christian truth shall be heard in all lands—when the voice of the preacher shall be gifted with powers that no one may gainsay nor resist. In that day, the “Lord shall give the word, and great shall be the company of the preachers; kings with their armies shall flee and be discomfited; and they of the household shall divide the spoil.” May it be your hope and desire through God, to be members of this household, to be sharers in this spoil. If your hearts be set upon this blessed lot, though you mourn now, you shall be comforted hereafter; though “you sow in tears, you shall reap in joy;” “though ye have lien among pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold.”

SERMON XXIV.

ROMANS xv, 30.

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.

ON an occasion, my brethren, like this,* when I have to perform the painful duty of addressing, perhaps for the last time, those with whom I have been, if not long, yet certainly closely connected, the words of the apostle in the text seemed but the echo of my own hopes and feelings. The tie indeed which binds, or should bind, the minister of God to the flock which is committed to his care, is one of the holiest of earthly bonds; and is so enduring, so sacred, that no time can weaken, no distance impair its strength. Amid the changes, indeed, of life, it must of necessity frequently happen, that the tent of the Christian

* This sermon was preached on the Sunday previous to the author's removal to Yarmouth.

shepherd's watching will be removed to another fold. Still, in thought and spirit, he will often revert to the scenes of his former care, the souls he has, through God, endeavoured to train up in the paths of righteousness; and though many a mile of travel may intervene between them, yet they will live enshrined in the memory and the affections of his heart. From them too he will receive, he hopes anxiously to receive, many a kind wish, many a pious prayer. He is but a frail and feeble being himself; and if he be a faithful teacher, he is conscious that he is so. He has need, then, of the heartfelt supplications of those who wish him well, that he may become, wherever his dwelling be fixed, a burning and a shining light. The office of a minister of the gospel is one, indeed, of the most awful and solemn responsibility; it is therefore one, in which the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous is especially needed. He who fills it, must walk circumspectly—must be careful that he gives the enemies of God no occasion to blaspheme. It is not sufficient that he preach righteousness; he must shew by his words and conduct, that the faith which he proclaims does in reality direct and influence his heart; he must let his light so shine before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify his Father who is in heaven.

If he fail thus to walk in holiness before God,

the adversaries of religion will rejoice in his backsliding, and triumph in the detected frailty of one of its selected champions. The friends of godliness, too, will mourn over the falling away of one whom they once hoped to have seen planted as a city upon a hill; they will weep tears of bitterness and sorrow, over the darkened radiance of that light, which should have been as a light to the Gentiles, and the glory of the Christian Israel. There can scarcely indeed be upon earth a more fearful sight, than that of a man, who has solemnly devoted himself to God's service, and has declared moreover, that he trusted it was through the Holy Spirit that he was induced to adopt so sacred a calling, forgetting the priesthood into which he has been admitted; forgetting its holiness, its nature, and its tendency; and defiling himself with the depravities and vices of the world. There is not a being more hateful in the sight of God, more despised in the sight of man. For what deeper insult can be offered to the majesty of the Eternal, than thus to minister at his altar, with hands stained by the guilt of vicious and impure indulgence; thus, with lips polluted, it may be, with the utterance of thoughts and sentiments, far more fitted for earth than heaven, to invoke the Saviour for his mercy, and proclaim peace and pardon to the repentant sinner. And with respect to man's opinion of such wickedness,

the veriest profligates who breathe amongst us, look with scorn and contempt upon the hypocrite, as one far deeper dyed in guilt than themselves. But it is not sufficient, my brethren, for a minister of the gospel to abstain from the grosser vices which have been here alluded to. Many examples of such miserable frailty, are not, I trust, to be found; though some indeed do now and then start up before us, to terrify us almost by their unnatural hideousness. The Christian teacher must be, in every respect, a doer of God's word, and not a preacher only. He must shew, by the purity of his own life, the sincerity of the faith he professes to hold, and that he is really anxious to approve himself in all things, a faithful watchman over the flock of Christ. He must, as far as the frailty of his nature will permit, do no evil, speak no evil, and think no evil. Our church in imitation of the practice of the apostles, does not indeed require her ministers, to throw aside the purer affections of humanity, to separate themselves, as it were, from their brethren, and renounce the bonds of affection, or the ties of kindred. They may be husbands, fathers, friends; they may take the interest of citizens in the prosperity of the commonwealth which protects them. Still it must be their part to beware, lest the privilege of these blessings be abused, and they become the chief objects of their care and anxiety.

They must ever bear in mind, that example from them is looked for as much as precept ; and that they are to take good heed, that they make not, by their misconduct, a brother to offend.

No one knew better than St. Paul did, the arduous nature of the duties which he and every preacher of the gospel is called upon to perform ; and no one has expressed in stronger terms than he has done, his apprehension, lest he should be found faithless in the day of great account. He was not ignorant of his own weakness, he knew, as he himself expresses it, that when he would do good, evil was present with him. He endeavoured, with God's grace, as he tells us, so to discipline his sinful affections, and restrain his unholy desires, that he might not, when he had preached to others, be himself a castaway. Convinced then, as he was, that to the prayers of the righteous, God would listen, he frequently desires the churches he had planted, to pray to God for him ; and he usually does so, at the conclusion of those affectionate and impressive letters which he sent them, when it seemed best to him so to minister to their spiritual wants. He desires the Ephesians to pray " always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit," not for themselves alone, but for him also ; that utterance might be given unto him, that he might open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gos-

pel. And again, in his epistle to the Thessalonians, he uses this simple but emphatic injunction, "Brethren, pray for us."

These anxious requests of the apostle I would this day adopt as my own; and thus make the last opportunity which remains to me of addressing you, an occasion of soliciting your petitions to the throne of grace, that I may be, in all things, a faithful steward over the mysteries of God. Conscious as I am, of the small pretension I have to identify myself with the great apostle of the Gentiles, yet an humble desire to imitate his example, will not, I trust, be deemed vain or presumptuous in me. It little, indeed, becomes a Christian, to seem to make a boast of his own piety, or of his wish to be pious. Yet circumstances do occasionally occur, in which he can scarcely avoid dwelling somewhat more largely upon his own hopes and feelings, than he would otherwise desire, or indeed, than it would be seemly for him to do. Of these occurrences, no one appears more likely to excite and to justify so prolonged an exposition of individual emotions and affections, than that, in which a minister of the gospel is called upon to address his hearers for the last time. Memory at these periods is busy; and if the intercourse which has subsisted between him and his flock, has been one of kindness and goodwill on both sides, the thought

that it is so soon to cease, cannot but be fraught with regret and sorrow. To me, my brethren, it is rendered doubly painful, from the circumstances which have attended my ministration among you. I came into this parish as a perfect stranger to every one of its inhabitants. I was introduced to you by none of those accidental recommendations of local influence and connection, of which all who enjoy such advantages, are so eager to avail themselves. When I ascended this pulpit for the first time, I scarcely knew even by sight, one of the members of my congregation. Nor has it been length of intercourse, which has procured for me those gratifying testimonies of kindness and regard, which I have had the happiness to experience, and the remembrance of which will never, I trust, be weakened or effaced. It is but two years since I thus became known to you, and even during that period, the other duties which I had to perform, exhausted so large a portion of my time, that little opportunity was given me of cultivating those offices of friendship, which I received at your hands so much encouragement to do. I know well, that I have sometimes, in consequence of these continual employments, been compelled, however reluctantly, to neglect some of the courtesies of life, which all are expected to pay in return for kindness shewn. Unlooked for,

then, as were those proofs of regard with which I have been welcomed among you, I have good reason to be sorrowful, that the active exertion of them must so soon be interrupted. True, indeed, it is, that it is not to the friendship he may meet with on earth, that the Christian minister must turn for the solace of his labours. He serves no earthly master, and he must expect no earthly recompense. Still it can as little be doubted, that his sphere of usefulness will much depend upon the esteem in which he is held by those, amongst whom his ministry is laid. I cannot then, in justice to my own feelings, permit this opportunity to pass away, without expressing how deeply sensible I am, of those many acts and expressions of benevolence, which, during my short sojourn here, it has been my lot to experience. I know not that we are required to stifle the expression of our thankfulness for such favours as these, which are ordained by providence, as antidotes to those many bitter draughts of sorrow, which we are in this world so frequently compelled to taste. We are all, indeed, but instruments in the hand of God, and to his bounty we owe every joy which we receive at the hands of man. Still the friend who aids us with his offices of good-will, may be, and ought to be thought of by us with gratitude, although we may ultimately refer the good we receive, to

God who inspires the heart. In acknowledging then from this place, that I am grateful for the kindness I have received from you, I am not I conceive violating its sanctity, nor suffering the thoughts of earthly sympathies, to intrude too far upon that precious time, which should on ordinary occasions be given to heaven alone. That kindness has, indeed, through God, been a solace and comfort to me, in the hour when sorrow laid her hand heavily upon me. It was a solace and comfort, not, I trust, because it flattered the vanity or pampered the pride of my heart, but because it came as the dew of heaven, hallowed by the cause which gave it birth. It is difficult indeed to speak on this subject, without exposing myself to the danger of being thought vain or presumptuous; and yet in truth, although I am sensible that it is to the humble efforts I have, by God's grace, been enabled to make, for the propagation of his gospel, that I owe the friendly feeling which has every where met me here,—I am not desirous of claiming any praise to myself; but I cannot leave you, without thus publicly declaring my gratitude. To God be all the honour, if honour there be: I am but an humble instrument in his hands; and if he has vouchsafed to employ me for good, may his name be blessed for the unmerited mercy.

With these feelings strongly impressed upon

me, I have always, striven with God's grace, to repress any emotions of pride or self-love with which the tempter may have sought to turn me from the path of duty. That I have not always succeeded is very possible; that my own heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, experience has amply taught me. The frailties which your kindness has overlooked, whilst I was among you, may perhaps hereafter recur to your remembrance. Should such be the case, still I am sure you will judge them without harshness, and in the love and charity which Christian brethren should always shew towards each other. You will pray for me, that I may be enabled to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. I shall, in truth, be in need of all your prayers and supplications. Awfully responsible as was the situation in which I have here stood, that to which I am now so soon to be transferred, is still more so. I go to it, I trust, duly sensible of this importance, and anxious, with God's help, to discharge the duties it involves, faithfully and zealously. That I can only accomplish this by the grace of God,—that I can only do all these things through the strength of Christ,—is the record of truth written by the hand of an apostle. Pray for me then, my brethren, that I may be thus strengthened and thus supported; pray for me, that I may make a right

use of the talents committed to my care ; that I may watch the vineyard entrusted to my husbandry so vigilantly, that neither the wild boar from the wood shall root it up, nor the wild beasts of the field devour it. Pray for me, that I may preach the gospel in truth and fearlessness ; that I may be made the means of bringing souls to Christ ; and of spreading the knowledge of the faith he taught, to be the comfort and joy of the contrite and humble heart.

For myself, my brethren, though removed from that pastoral superintendence, which it has lately been my happiness to exercise amongst you, I am not, I never shall be, estranged from the wish of seeing this Jerusalem of my almost earliest care, in prosperity all the day long. Prosperity, I mean, in its holiest sense ; not advancement in worldly wealth—not increase of power or honour ; but a larger share of those graces of holiness, which are the only true and unfading riches. It may be, by God's mercy, that I have been made the sower of some of that good seed which has fallen on good ground ; it may be, that I have been enabled by his might, to awaken the sinner from his dreams of security to the knowledge of the true and only path of salvation ; that I have poured, too, the wine and oil of consolation upon the bruised and broken heart. If any there be, to whom I have thus been, through

Christ, the means of comfort and gladness, they will listen, I am sure, with attention to the last words of exhortation I may ever have the opportunity of uttering here. Those who have hitherto heard me with almost affectionate kindness, will hear me now, when I am thus about to close not a lengthened, certainly, but an anxious, and I hope in God, not altogether a useless ministry. It is true, indeed, and to me it brings with it no small consolation, that the distance, which will hereafter separate us in this world, is not such as to prevent me from anticipating the happiness of frequently meeting with those, who have formed here a portion of the flock committed to my care. And if in future times, when addressing the fold over whom I am to preside, my eye should rest upon one whose face upon these solemnities was in former sabbaths familiar to me, I shall rejoice in the humble hope that the seed yet flourishes, and the plant is still growing up to heaven. Yet, though I trust that many such gleams of Christian joy are in store for me, still, my brethren, it may never be my lot again to meet you all thus gathered together for the purposes of Christian worship, and to enjoy the opportunity thus given me, of once more solemnly entreating you to hold fast that which is good. The hand of the destroyer may, and in all probability will, select his victims from your numbers,

ere any occasion can call me to address you again. I myself, though now, by God's blessing, in the full enjoyment of health and strength, may, before that period can arrive, have been gathered to the narrow bed of our last earthly rest. And, besides this, the changes and chances of life may call many of you far away from the present home of your dwelling, to distant lands, perhaps to other shores. Let me then embrace the occasion which your presence here affords me, to beseech you to walk in that strait and narrow road, which can alone lead you to peace, either in this world or in that which is to come. You all profess to be members of the church of Christ; see, then, that you "hold fast that form of sound words," which the gospel enjoins. From a right and true faith, all real piety must proceed. Heed not the vain and empty language of the unbeliever, that his faith cannot be wrong whose life is right. For no life can be right which is not guided and controlled by the Spirit of Truth. You might as well try to turn the whirlwind from its course, or still the ocean in its wildest mood, as hope to stem the headlong current of human passion and desire, without the aid and support of an arm mightier than your own. You cannot, my brethren, practice one Christian duty without the help of Christian grace; you cannot come before God's throne in hope, except you

come clothed in the armour of a Christian soldier, and sprinkled with the blood, not of the foes you have slain, but of the Lamb who was slain for you. These solemn and precious truths of our holy faith, it has been ever my object and wish to impress upon your hearts. It may be, that in bringing them before you so frequently as I have done, I have seemed to some to dwell too much upon the same subjects, and they may have craved fresh pastures, and desired to wander by other streams. But to such, if such there have been, I would reply, that God has sent his ministers abroad not to call those who consider themselves righteous, but sinners to repentance; not to please the fancy and amuse the ears of his hearers, but to seek to warm their hearts by the preaching of the glad tidings of redemption, and carry them to the Saviour's bosom, by unfolding to view their own weakness and sinfulness, and his great and manifold mercies. This is the gospel which every pastor is enjoined to preach to his flock. To this great end should all his teaching and exhortation tend. And had it been my lot to have lived amongst you to the latest years of my existence, I should, by God's blessing, have still continued to preach Christ crucified, the power of God unto salvation.

This world, my brethren, and all its vain and unsubstantial pageantry, must, to all of us, in a

few brief years, pass away. My hope has been, not to render you wealthy or prosperous here, but to turn your attention rather from that which must of necessity be of such short endurance, to an inheritance which fadeth not away. I would cause you to dwell, not in the palaces and courts of earth, but in a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The time will shortly come, when you will be summoned to shew the use you have made of those admonitions and exhortations you have here received, and I, to render a strict account of the stewardship to which I have been appointed. It may be, that God, in his mercy, will grant hereafter, that the good shall meet and know each other again. The remembrance of the evil will probably perish with them; but the spirits of the just will live together in light. Perhaps, too, the faithful shepherd, and those of his flock whom he has brought to God, may be united again in holier bonds than those which bound them on earth; bonds which no accident can loosen, no change impair. Will it, my brethren, be our fate thus to meet, and thus to part no more. Pray for me, then, that I may fight the good fight of faith, and not, having preached to others, be myself a cast-away. And I will pray for you, if God will aid me with his Spirit—I will pray for you, my dear brethren, with the prayer of an humble and anxious heart,

that when the Lamb of God shall spread the marriage supper for his chosen children, you may find a place there, not as bidden only, but as elected guests. If this holy link of mutual love exist between us, we may be separated indeed, but we cannot be estranged. Earthly affection may be, and often is weakened, if not destroyed, by absence ; but the ties of Christian love can never be broken. A new flock, indeed, will soon become the immediate objects of my solicitude ; but still, dear as they may be to me, they will never, I trust, and I am sure they will never desire, to banish from my remembrance the wish for your welfare and immortal happiness. When, therefore, I bid you farewell, I do so as ceasing to minister longer among you, not as ceasing to feel an interest in that religious improvement and spiritual consolation, which I have endeavoured, I hope, to promote within these walls.

There is much in this reflection, which comes at periods like these, to soften the regret which must necessarily attend them. Yet, my brethren, if a moment more may be allowed me, to speak of my own feelings and wishes, I would add, that although I leave you in sorrow, yet is it a sorrow not unmingled with joy. For I go, I trust, I have reason to trust, not unaccompanied by the good wishes of all who hear me now ; and I go to those, amongst whom your kindness has

much contributed to bring me a Christian welcoming. It is a source of joy, because, aware as I am, that you knew me first only as the minister appointed over you, and humbly hoping that I have preached the truth without fear or favour, I view in your friendship to me, an approbation of the doctrine I have taught, and a desire to make pleasant the paths of those who are the faithful ministers of God's revelations. May God, in his mercy, still cultivate this holy spirit in your hearts; and if, hereafter, you should still wish to renew the gladness which this hope of your righteousness has now imparted, send me the glad tidings that you have quitted yourselves like men; that you have stood fast in the faith; that you are strong. I have indeed much solace now in the hope, that some of you I may have awakened—some I may have strengthened—some I may have comforted and sustained. But it will bring me a far brighter consolation, it will give me a far more enduring joy, if, in after years, when age brings its infirmities and cares, (should a bounteous providence spare my life till then,) your hearts shall still bless me, as one who, under God's guidance, trained your earlier steps into the ways of peace.

My brethren, it is hard to say farewell; it is hard, even under all the alleviations which circumstances bring, to bid you adieu. May God

bless you all in time and in eternity; may his Spirit dwell in you here on earth, and guide you to the Saviour's rest in heaven. And if we meet not in this world again, may we, my dear brethren, meet in the courts of our Redeemer's kingdom; and may it be mine, whilst kneeling in humble joy before the throne of the Lamb who was slain, to adopt, with gratitude and praise, his own words of bright and holy consolation; and to exclaim, whilst presenting before him the souls, whom his mercy has employed me as an humble instrument of converting to his service, "Of them," O Lord, "which thou gavest me, have I lost none."

NORWICH:
PRINTED BY WILKIN & FLETCHER, UPPER HAYMARKET.

